MORE CAL'S GOSSIP

PITCHER'S LATEST.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

https://archive.org/details/moregalssgossip00bins

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

GAL'S GOSSIP

"Bright, sparkling, and racy, the book is somewhat strikingly deliberate, and will be an agreeable addition to the bachelor's library."—**Sun.**

"Will be much in demand in the smoking-room. The letters are replete with the piquancy for which the 'Pitcher' is noted, and the volume will undoubtedly add to the enjoyment of the evening cigar."—**Financial Times.**

"It is not enough for the author of 'Gal's Gossip' to raise a smile; he makes you burst with loud explosions. It is gay, saucy, reckless, witty. In short, 'Gal's Gossip' is a shocking good book."—**London Referee.**

HOUNDSDITCH DAY BY DAY

". . . I recommend every one possessed of the slightest sense of humour, and who care to smile loudly, to make a point of securing a copy with as little delay as possible."—**Pelican.**

"'Houndsditch Day by Day' should generate sixty hearty laughs in an hour's railway journey."—**Glasgow Evening News.**

"Prince of Bohemians and jolly good fellows, who made the sides of Club-land sore with his inimitable 'Gal's Gossip' is represented by 'Houndsditch Day by Day.' It is a book to be kept from strait-laced relations and Sunday-School teachers, a book that no visiting clergyman would carry under his arm, but it would be difficult for even them to withstand its humour. It is a diabolically clever book."—**The Sketch.**

Also part Author of

A PINK 'UN AND A PELICAN

"This volume, the maddest, merriest book, full of irresponsible fun and reckless frivolity. . . . Wonderful collection of reminiscences of late nights, early mornings, and riotous days, in which race-courses, deep potations, prize-fights, the Pelican Club, and all the easy fashions of Bohemia hold uproarious revel, without one touch of ill-temper or malice. . . . We take leave of the book with genuine regret. . . . But it is full of good spirits and facile *bonhomie*, spiced, too, with salt which, if not precisely Attic in flavour, is good, representative Bohemian."—**The Daily Telegraph.**

"Quite a delightful book is 'A Pink 'Un and a Pelican.' Mr Binstead is a born *raconteur*, and having a story to tell, knows exactly how to tell it for all it is worth. . . . 'A Pink 'Un and a Pelican' is not romance; it is the history of a period, and a study of men and manners in Upper Bohemia and the world of sport."—**The Referee.**

"The like, among books, of 'A Pink 'Un and a Pelican' we do not know. . . . The recommendation we can give is—Read it—there is no other way of getting all the juice out of it that it may be made to yield—and then it will not be a squeezed orange, for we can pick it up a year hence and again enjoy it."—**The Sportsman.**

Large Crown 8vo. Cloth. Price 3s. 6d. per volume

MORE

GAL'S

GOSSIP

MORE
GAL'S GOSSIP

BY

ARTHUR M. BINSTEAD

Otherwise known as "PITCHER" of the Pink 'Un.

LONDON

SANDS & COMPANY

MDCCCCI

Printed at
The Edinburgh Press,
9 & 11 Young Street.

GAL'S GOSSIP

"I think you should certainly accept the seat in his box at the Promenade Concerts, and your sky-blue satin, slashed with orange, will look very nicely. As you have known him only a week, your bearing should be just coy enough to keep him interested; but, should he become too impulsive, there is no harm in your checking him by some simple phrase such as 'What do you take me for?' or 'I don't know what you mean.' Equal parts of ground white lead and sacrum, mixed with boiled oil and turps, and applied to the glass with a painter's brush, will obscure the objectional view at present to be had from your back window."—*The Lady's Letter in the Fashion Paper.*

BY THE WAY

Doctor Samuel Johnson's excuse for the interminable length of his dictionary—he is reported to have said, rather weakly, the serious will think, that "one word seemed to call for another"—must be Maude's apology for her second volume; it has been provoked by the reception accorded "Gal's Gossip" in '99. Further provocation of this sort can only cause the writer needless pain and labour; he still cherishes the hope that some wealthy person (of either, or any, sex) will adopt him ere it is too late.

A. M. B.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
JANVIER	1
FEVRIER	21
MARS	35
AVRIL	50
MAI	64
JUIN	79
JUILLET	94
AOÛT	104
SEPTEMBRE	122
OCTOBRE	137
NOVEMBRE	150
DECEMBRE	169

MORE GAL'S GOSSIP

JANVIER

HOTEL METROPOLE, BRIGHTON,
NEW YEAR'S DAY.

MY DARLING MADGE,—

Thanks, and very many thanks, and thanks again, dear little cousin, for your positively delightful New Year's gift. Nothing more exquisite than your sweet little filigree puff-box have I ever seen. It is adorable, it is superb; but since it is perfectly impossible with the prevailing skin-tight skirts to secrete such an article about one's body, and as only the most impulchritudinous pollies and mediæval tabbies still cling to the powder-puff—(and how is it that *you*, Madge, have failed to note that the modern girl, when she thinks she is unobserved, is wont to produce from the top of

her right stocking a lump of swansdown which has generally seen much service?)—I feel quite sure that you will not mind my sending the outer part of it to my brother in Pall Mall Place, to carry his cachous in. Poor boy! he was *so* depressed when I called on him yesterday. Being the coldest day in the year his gas was cut off, and relations between him and his landlady were much strained. He had a vague idea that he had asked some man from his old regiment to lunch at the Café Royal; he was certain that he had invited a girl to supper, and was wondering whether she would stand being given whelks and porter in Old Compton Street. He had no possible chance of pursuing the oof-bird at Lingfield unless a scratched horse won at Manchester; and he was sadly sorting his judgment-summonses in alphabetical order when there came a rap at the door. From force of habit he hid under the table, but it turned out to be, not a process-server but an old chum, who with cheery good-nature cried, "Here's a New Year's present for you, sonnie. I have noticed how devilishly careless you are with money, and have brought you a sovereign purse." And Algy took the present and wrung his friend's hand warmly, as, with a great gulping sob, he

hastily endeavoured to squeeze a half-penny, two sixpences, and a blue bone card-counter into what should have been a receptacle for nobler coins.

Our presence in Brighton at this moment is mainly due to poor Charlie's unsuccessful efforts at finance, for though we quite thought we had squared our most clamorous tradesman with a box at the play for him and his wife and his daughters,—bless you! we had a bankruptcy notice fired into us before we were out of bed next morning. He was only a fishmonger, but in his fishboy days he had been an ardent galleryite and had fairly "eaten" Macready, and Kean, and the elder Matthews, and, as ill-luck would have it, we had sent him to about the worst-acted swashbuckling play in London.

"You fellows are always howling about commercial depression," once said the dear old Crowner to a bootmaker who had stuck a writ into him, "but there will *always* be commercial depression so long as you fools of tradesmen waste all your money in legal expenses!" Then again, Charlie's latest promotion, a limited company to put on the market a patent for boring the holes in macaroni by a much cheaper process than the one at present in vogue, did

not go to allotment; and there have been various and divers other reasons why at times a sojourn in a coal-cellar with the door locked has seemed more enjoyable than a walk down Piccadilly in the height of the season.

But, down here, we are comparatively secure —indeed we ought to be actually cheerful, for if there is anything in this variegated old world brisker or brighter than a fine winter forenoon at Brighton, when the sun's good-morning kiss to "the front" is not too far off to be echoed, then I have lost the tally of it, and gone and corked myself, as dear old Juvenal says.

And now, dear, I am going to tell you of a sportive little incident that occurred here yesterday, part of which I observed with my own eyes, whilst the rest I plead guilty to ferreting out. I despise the gossips who are constantly saying they "couldn't help hearing" certain things. Why didn't they cough?

Anyway, yesterday afternoon, when the vestibule of the hotel was very full of people, as it generally is about an hour before dinner, who should enter but a certain young Mr Dullingham, who holds the responsible and dignified post of official inspector of hypodermic syringes, or something, to the stewards of the Jockey Club,

and with him was an over-dressed young person who was obviously not his bride. To a critical eye these things stand out as clear as moonlight falling on a dead mackerel that has been stranded on a muddy foreshore. Mark me, dear, whenever the male of a newly-arrived pair at a seaside hotel handles the female as if he were afraid he would break her, you may lay a slight shade of odds that she is a lawful bride; but when, on the other hand, the young gentleman scratches his head reflectively as he takes up the pen to register, whilst the young lady tosses her shapely head and sneers at the bureau clerk with all the effrontery of a brass plate, well—What ho! as somebody once observed in the auction rooms at Madrid.

As young Mr Dullingham turned into the office on the left-hand side of the hall, in order to register, he chanced to brush past the pillar of respectability who keeps the fines-for-running-in-wrong-colours and the extra-quid-for-saddling-at-the-post accounts at Weatherby's—a supremely reputable person—and it was very evident that the young gentleman who was monkeying with the seventh commandment was actively aware that he was dancing, metaphorically, on the front door-step of a full-sized scandal which

might fly back and hit him in the hereafter. So when the clerk behind the register handed Dick —as his familiars call him—a pen, he took it with an abstracted air, scrawled "Mr and Mrs Wilmington Wishard, Saffron Walden," in the book, and doubtless felt devoutly glad to get it over.

The young couple had been allotted a suite on the third floor, and to reach the elevator they had to pass some forty or fifty people sitting in chairs, the men for the most part disinterestedly chattering; the women audibly criticising others to whom they were not known with that delicate sense of decency which distinguishes a congregation of middle-class ladies from a box of monkeys. But just as young Mr Dullingham was about to hand his little side-show, as dear Arthur Roberts says, into the lift, the loud voice of Mr Surcingle-Stubbs, a wealthy young gentleman, who owns a long string of steeple-chasers in training at Lewes, and who had been very condescending to Dullingham, hailed him from the passage leading from the smoking-room. There was nothing for it but to bundle the puss unceremoniously into the lift and go back to Surcingle-Stubbs. As the door of the lift closed and the car itself started heaven-

ward, Dullingham swallowed the lump that had risen in his throat as a famished ostrich would take down a brass door-knob.

Mr Surcingle-Stubbs was boisterously effusive in his welcome. Now that flat-racing was over, he said, he really did hope that Richard could find time to spend a few days at Lewes and look over the horses. He was training them on cow peas this winter. Bring the good lady down; by the way wasn't that the good lady he had seen entering the lift? Evidently embarrassed, Dick replied that it was. Really? Then they must all dine together. Mr Stubbs was expecting Selsey, who had all Lord Sandown's horses this winter, and was doing them on cow peas, too. Cow peas had never been thought anything of before, save as a horticultural exhibit, but both he and old Selsey found that horses thrived on them, and that was what Selsey was coming over to dine with him and talk about. He would take no denial. Dullingham and his wife must make up the quartette at his table.

Inwardly Richard Dullingham seemed to be much perplexed. Whilst it would have given to his spurious bridal trip the look of genuineness that he felt was sorely lacking, to have dined

with Stubbs and Selsey, neither of whom would ever be likely to encounter the legitimate Mrs Dullingham, he did not feel at all sure as to how the little bit of muslin would take a prolonged cow pea conversation. So he said rather rapidly, that nothing in the wide world would have given him greater joy and delight, but—er—but, well, the fact was that the little missus wasn't quite herself this evening. Stubbs was instantly most sympathetic and solicitous. What was the matter with her; nothing serious, he sincerely hoped?

Dullingham said it was—er—eh—yes, of course—lumbago. She was a perfect martyr to lumbago; several of her family had *died* of it. Frequently there were times when she could not sleep for weeks together for it, in fact——

But just at that moment the little golden-haired page-boy who flies about with the guests' telegrams and letters—dear Mrs Mortimer Toddpush, who seems to *live* here, calls the little fellow "Ringworm," because he runs around so much—appeared and cried aloud:

"Three hund'ed an' thirty-seven."

"That's mine," said Dullingham, turning round. "What is it, boy?"

"Lady says, sir," answered the boy, "that are you aware as you've only ten minutes to dress for dinner, and that she's nearly ready?"

"I'm mighty pleased to hear it," interposed Mr Stubbs, "for the lady's lumbago is evidently better. In ten minutes, Mr D., and our table 's right over in the further corner there."

Upstairs young Dullingham found his fair companion already dressed for dinner in a ravishing frock of black *chiffon*, and looking perfectly radiant. As he rushed into the room and commenced to fling his clothing right and left, she slid up to him and planted a kiss on his lips that would have made the hair stand on an Egyptian mummy; but Dullingham was in a hurry to dress. As he clambered into his sable togs, he repeated Stubbs' invitation to dinner, but the scornful little brunette only replied with a mocking laugh. Had she known, she said, that he expected her to hold receptions, she would have been more careful than to come away without a wedding ring; as it was, not one of hers had enough plain gold band to it when twisted round to deceive even a Ridgmount Gardens night porter; if, however, he chose to do these funny things——, etc.

The awkwardness of the position almost forced

Richard, who hated little worries and vexed situations at every turn, to register a vow that henceforward he would try and subsist solely on home-made pastry—even in this iconoclastic age—but the reflection that even this desperate and heroic resolve would scarcely extricate him from his present shlemozzle, stopped him taking any such Utopian oath. Clearly he could do nothing but dart out as soon as he was dressed, and buy a ring at the nearest jeweller's. There was one, he remembered, at the western corner of Regency Square.

Three white ties fell martyrs to his haste, but Mamie only laughed as each crumpled strip of lawn was discarded. Finally, he got one perfectly square bow, right under his left ear, and with the reassured air of one who has striven with big things and vanquished them, he popped into the lift and descended, telling Mamie to await his return in the drawing-room.

It was no distance at all to the jeweller's at the corner of Regency Square, but, arrived there, he caught sight of Dick Dunn and his wife making selections from a tray full of gewgaws on the glass case of the shop counter, and as Dunn was well known to Dullingham, all thought of purchasing a wedding ring at *that* establishment was

altogether out of the question. With a heaving heart, therefore, Richard flew like a hare up Preston Street, bent on spotting in the Western Road some unfashionable shop where only the locals bought their ornaments and got their watches cleaned. As his luck would have it, he hit upon just such a shop at his first turn. It was old-fashioned enough to have stood in Gomorrah—or even Zoar—and as he pushed open its single glazed door, a bell above his head rang out with a resonance and clearness which would have been ruined by a steady flow of customers.

A shock-headed young man, with weak eyes and an expression like the seven years of famine of Scripture history, produced a tray of rings and a sort of short wooden baton with marks upon it. What size, please?

Richard had taken Mamie's size for rings before. One that wouldn't quite go over the second joint of his right-hand little finger would suit excellently. Such a one was soon found.

"No paper, thankye," said the fidgety customer. "How much?"

The young man answered that the ring was 22s., but he spoke with an air of preoccupation and gazed rather anxiously through the little

door-window of the parlour that was behind the shop. Apparently not seeing what he desired in there, he stamped furiously on the floor, and in a minute or two a delightfully bland and clean old gentleman, whose black silk stock was not made in the last quarter of the century, made his appearance, seemingly from below.

"Weddin' ring, sir," said the shopman curtly to the bland old gentleman, as he picked Dick's sovereign and a half up from the counter and went to the till to get the change. The old gentleman nodded his head approvingly, and his beaming smile became more expansive.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said putting on quite a paternal tone, and addressing himself to Richard, "but I respectfully tender you my heartiest congratulations, and hope that you and the dear young lady who is to share your future fortunes may be very, very happy. It is the custom of our house, whenever we sell a wedding ring, to ask the lady, through the bridegroom elect, to do us the honour to accept as a slight contribution to beginning housekeeping a trifling present of half a dozen of our Nonpariel Bonanza electro-plated teaspoons, which we warrant to keep their colour and wear pure white all the way through. We have taken the

liberty of including them in the package with the ring, sir, and, in reiterating our sincere good wishes for your happiness, we trust your union may be blessed by children, for happy indeed is the man who has his quiver——"

"Oh, go to Hell!" roared the bridegroom elect, as, grabbing his eight shillings with one hand and his purchases with the other, he brushed abruptly out of the shop.

Mr and Mrs Wilmington Wishard of Saffron Walden did not dine with Mr Surcingle Stubbs and Mr Selsey that evening. For after Mrs Wilmington Wishard had waited, and waited, for her supposed husband's return, until she had found out that the dinner had run its course as far as the *entrées*, she let her temper have the upper hand, and, ashamed to remain alone in the drawing-room, returned to her bedroom in a decided huff. It was there that young Mr Dullingham found her; it is there that I propose to leave them.

But I should add that a few minutes after the time of Dullingham's return, one of the cheeriest members of the Brighton Sailing Club, down on the beach almost opposite the hotel, was struck heavily upon the hat by some falling parcel, just as he was steering himself in at the

club door to get one for the bacilli and ascertain what had won the last race at Plumpton. And picking up the package and examining its contents, he presently threw all his brother-members assembled in the smoking-room into a state of great amazement by making the extraordinary announcement:

"By God, boys, it's raining teaspoons!"

Which goes to prove, Madge, as that weak-eyed old evangelist used to declare in the old days in Hyde Park, that "The way of the transgressor is 'ot." But I must tell you of a strange meeting.

Last evening I was going down to East Street to order some gloves, when——"Oho! vintner, brandy ere we swoon!" as dear old Hughie used to exclaim—whom do you suppose I ran across? But, there, you never would guess—poor Freddie Faux Pastonne, the impecunious youngest son of the Earl of Lundyisland, actually. He was hopelessly "broke," as usual, but this time by a very strange mischance. Of course, being a quadruple bankrupt, and "wanted" as well on heaven only knows how many committal orders, he "*dare* not have money," as he said, but, feeling desperately in need of a few days out of town, he got an Italian restaurateur in London to cash him a

note-paper cheque on the London and County Sand Bank for a "pony," with nearly all the proceeds of which he boarded the Pullman at Victoria. About half way to Brighton, when the train was travelling at quite sixty miles an hour, and the dear engine was beginning to feel a trifle run down, an old fogey who had been dozing in his chair with a silk handkerchief over his head, awoke with a shout, as vulgar persons and those who falsify their cash-accounts frequently do, and cried out that his note-case had been stolen from his pocket. It contained four new five-pound notes, he said, and "no living soul was a-going to leave that train" till he got his money back. Foreseeing an all-round search, and having exactly four new five-pound notes, the origin of which he would rather not go into (for by this time it was fair to presume that the Italian had realised the fact that the Sand Bank was a shoal), in his own pocket, poor Freddie began to feel extremely uneasy. So in order to avoid complications, he slipped out of the car, and crossing three or four platforms forward, reached the smoker. Here, under the pretence of drawing himself a glass of iced water, he tucked his folded notes under the filter, and then returned to be searched. Needless to relate, the old gentleman

did not get his notes back—neither did poor Freddie, for whilst the search by the conductor was going on, the front half of the train, including the smoker, was switched at Three Bridges, and taken on to Eastbourne! No wonder he seemed downcast, that a sense of his sheer loneliness oppressed him, for though the Faux Pastonnes are a proud and wealthy old family, and can, I am told, trace their genealogical tree right back to the skeleton of a Carthaginian welsher, now in the Bideford Museum, who came over here, B.C., in search of tin, and remained, they seem to have no use for their l.l. son. They simply ignore his existence—indeed Freddie said he would cheerfully walk the hundred-and-eighty odd miles between here and the coast of Devonshire, knee deep in snow, and swim the rest, to bite his own mother, but that, with his noble alleged father away shooting in the Highlands, there was no saying under whose roof his lady mother might be. With that he drew from his pocket a photograph of a still beautiful woman, taken in her coronet, standing at a sort of latticed window, overhung with papier-maché gladioli and tin tulips, and spat at it savagely—conduct which might well shock any one who did not happen to be intimately acquainted, as I am, with the

merry Countess and her captivating but irresponsible little ways. Poor fellow! he had put up with enough, too, from his own girlish consort, to whom he had been devotedly attached, and who he never even suspected of infidelity until, during one of her periodical absences from home, she wrote to him from a hotel at Melton Mowbray which had been totally consumed by fire quite five weeks previously. These, added to his other misfortunes, seemed to have completely clouded his whole life, and he said he had quite made up his mind to commit suicide that very afternoon, only he unfortunately allowed the fashionable hour for doing so to slip by while drinking with some old race-course companions in the New Ship.

I am well aware that you consider me eccentric, little one, but dear old Brighton still holds my affection as tightly even as it did in my schooldays—those golden days when dear little fellows in Eton suits used to scale the rain-water pipes outside our schoolhouse—at times hanging on literally by their teeth—to pick off the little notes from the end of the rope made of garter-ribbons that were slyly hung from the bedroom windows. One still sees a great deal of nice people at Brighton—especially of the poor girls

who get caught by the four winds at the corner of Ship Street. By the way all the smartest women down here are wearing cinnamon-brown lace lisle-thread hose and old-rose "Gripwick" suspenders. The only drawback to Brighton is the early dining. I positively *cannot* eat in the declining sunshine, but Charlie goes down to the *table d'hôte* at half-past six, and, never missing his fences, is about two octaves ahead of me during the rest of the evening. How rapidly, by the way, the beach at Brighton is disappearing; and again, if the place is to continue to hold its own, the corporation will have to send out for more water. It was so shallow under the West Pier the other morning that the fish actually had to stand on their heads to get a drink, and the aroma——! It reminded me of an old well we had at the *pensionnat* I was once at at Bruges. Typhoid broke out and had carried off best part of the first class in calisthenics when they decided to clean out the well. It was then found to contain a goat, three copies of the unexpurgated *La Pucelle d'Orleans*, a tin dipper, about a gallon of angleworms that had met death locked in one another's arms, a pack-saddle, and a former dancing master, named Garnier, who had disappeared the night before the twenty-four hours

expired during which he was to marry the principal's eldest daughter. She was such a lovely girl, too, but the old *maître d'école* was not out for family scandals, and packed her off to a convent at Tangiers, whence she returned in a few years with a couple of little black-and-tan grandchildren for him at foot.

By the way, dear, I had a long and anxious letter yesterday from Muriel Redgrave, soliciting my "candid opinion" as to the permanent benefits, or otherwise of massage. Her elderly grandfather, it appears, is a perfect martyr to lumbago, and quite lately he consulted a ten-guinea specialist in rheumatic affections in Queen Anne Street, who prescribed bi-weekly massage. Strange to relate, as the old gentleman wended his way home through Regent Street, he spied a sandwich man carrying a board on which was advertised a massage establishment in Swallow Street, where "Nurses Tootsie and Elsie, assisted by Sisters Cora, Angelina Maude, and Puss," might be seen between the hours of 10 A.M. and 10 P.M., and the old gentleman went there. Three hours later, the poor old dear was brought home on an ambulance in a half-dazed and utterly prostrate condition, and, after babbling wildly and repeatedly of the "*ex*-tra-

ordinary treatment," and declaring, more or less coherently, that he never would have believed that any London physician would have prescribed such things, he fell into a deep slumber, and has remained in that condition for eight days.

With regard to your query, dear, as to where you can get "The Sailor's Size, by Balfe," I do not know, but I should advise you to apply at the Sailors' Home, which is somewhere down by the West India Dock gates. You do not say precisely what size "The Sailor's Size, by Balfe" may be, but I enquired of one of the coastguardsmen here, and he says that you will find, if you go down there yourself, that "they've got 'em *all* sizes." This, dear, is the best I can do for you.

Now, mind you write, little one, or better still, run down by the Limited Pullman on Sunday?—Your loving cousin,

MAUDE.

FEVRIER

THREE GABLES, BOTTOMBARLEY,
THURSDAY.

MY DEAR LITTLE COUSIN,—

I can quite imagine your surprise on catching sight of the postmark on the envelope enclosing this; we were literally spirited away into the country at a moment's notice, and are spending a few days—which heaven grant may not extend to weeks!—with the hospitable, though distinctly unsophisticated, Merridews. Not that the country-side is at all interesting just now, and travelling at this season I positively abhor—raw, dark mornings, breakfast by gaslight, and the rumbling drive to the station in a four-wheeler smelling as though a successful smoking concert had been held in it by the cabman and his stable associates overnight. Eugh! But it had to be endured. At the time of taking my pretty flat in Mount Street, I must tell you, the house-agent assured

me that we should have hot and cold water in every room; but I need hardly add that I did not for an instant take this to mean only when the pipes burst. Nevertheless, he now has the effrontery to contend that his words were open to this construction, though he admits it with remorse; but as Charlie pointed out to him, standing in the pool in the drawing-room with his fishing boots on, there were already several hundred gallons more remorse in the place than we could possibly use. Nobody would believe, nor could I overstate, the annoyance I have suffered over the water at that flat. One huge cistern, you see, has to supply, as well as the residents, the stables in the mews at the back, and often and often I have been left high and dry in my bath-tub, in the midst of a most refreshing ablution, because it suddenly occurred to the Duke of Southmolton's stablemen that his lordship's carriage required a cold douche. And to remain there during the repairing of the burst pipes was quite out of the question, since the first plumber's mate who came and instantly proceeded to stick our svelte little kitchener full of queer iron things that looked like instruments of torture left over from the Inquisi-

tion, had all the powerful natural odour of a basket of pups, and he said there were three others coming. He told Charlie it would greatly expedite matters if we could let him have a "coupler-bob" to "eat the sawder-quick;" but as Charlie endeavoured to make him understand the only tools we had in the place were a cork-screw, a pair of nut-crackers and a can-opener, whereupon he went away growling, presumably to fetch this peculiar instrument. I wonder if in all your travels, Madge, *you* ever heard of a "coupler-bob?"

But gaining knowledge by personal observation never was your strong point, was it, dear? I could not help thinking, as I read your sweetly ingenuous letter over for the second time, that when Providence was distributing Acuteness your name was not called out. Now, my dear child, *do* you for one moment seriously suppose that the great Sara has added Dr Caissarato, the beauty specialist, to her retinue with the sole idea of his curing, by course of post, unknown lady correspondents suffering from all the ailments known to medical science, ranging between too early buxomising and the Lazarus difficulty? She may show an absolute indifference to expense where her own personal

beauty is at stake—(I daresay you remember how she sent for Mr Clarkson to go out all the way to Naples just because she had ventured so close to the crater of Vesuvius that one of her curls had been singed off?)—but "the drinks are on me," as the men say, if she is scattering her *louis d'or* around for the general feminine weal. Now *do* you imagine, Madge, that if every poor but deserving girl for whom a tough finish has been confidently predicted could drop a letter-card to the doctor and get a complexion like the heart of a June rose at the first rattle out of the box, Monsieur Caissarato would have any time left to devote to filling out Madame's wrinkles till his work almost came under the head of taxidermy, or to massaging her nether limbs till they seemed as round and as plump as a brace of the irrepressible Mr Billie Harris's world-famed three-ounce pea-fed skin-tights, which one sees frying in the restaurant windows?

Come off! It is what you complain of when taking equestrian exercise, I think, that indicates most plainly the real cause of your trouble; your inability, when bumping the saddle, to grunt at the same time as the horse does proves that you are making flesh too rapidly. Plenty of

exercise, both physical and mental, would be better for you than massage, though even exercise in excess will make a woman all knees and elbows. Nevertheless there is not enough bodily exertion in the *régime* of the Harley Street faddist who told you that travelling on a railway, the roadbed of which was made up with the head toward the engine, would do all that was needed. It *may* be all right, but it leaves too much for the imagination to accomplish, as the conscientious gentleman observed in his sleeve after being advised by the Father Confessor to make his lawful wife leave off her wedding-ring whenever he wanted a little excitement. *I* would suggest that you begin with —say waltzing and tree-climbing. A pure, and at the same time wiry, young man, who for a small consideration would swing you round for two or three hours each evening might be found by a three-and-sixpenny advertisement in the *Morning Post*, and quite possibly he might know of a secluded plantation, with some twenty-five to thirty-five feet high elm or sour-wood trees, in a locality which was not much frequented. Whilst engaged in these pursuits, you might pleasantly combine the mental with the physical by thinking out cryptograms or designing wall-paper.

How sorry, I am sure, you will be to hear that Fanny is far from comfortable in her new house in South Belgravia. Fascinated by the nicely-sounding address, she took the place in much too great a hurry, and it now transpires that its previous occupants were the most awful people, and were only got rid of by being forcibly cleared out by the vestry, backed up by the police and reinforced by the fire brigade from the local stations. At all hours of the day and night, Fanny says, men, generally more or less intoxicated, drive up in hansoms, and ask for persons by their Christian names, such as "Effie," and "Addie," and "Rosie"—and by the number of "Rosie's" friends she seems to have been well-known and popular enough to have carried the single men's vote for the Borough Council, had she wanted to — and as Fanny's housemaid persists, despite all Fanny's attempts at teaching, in showing *every one* into the morning-room, poor Fanny constantly has to face the most trying situations. Only on Monday last one of these callers sent the housemaid upstairs to inquire for "the Crazy Countess"—said he "didn't know her by any other name, and didn't want to"—and then, placing his cane in one of Fanny's beautiful Dresden flower pitchers on the

sideboard, and balancing his hat on one of the incandescent globes over the fireplace, he opened the piano and began to roar out a perfectly dreadful song, with a refrain that sounded like "Rumpsy-bumpsy-rollicky-oh!"; whilst on Wednesday night—or, more properly, early on Thursday morning—the front door was nearly hammered in by five young fellows in evening dress, who had driven up in one hansom, and when Fanny answered them from her bedroom window they cried out that it was "all right," that they were "Bob and Bert and Charlie back from the front," and they had brought "a dozen of Boy from the Continental and a game pie twice as big as London." If it were not for this terrible drawback Fanny would give a pleasant little house-warming—indeed she had made all her arrangements for it, even to the extent of borrowing extra glass and china—but she is positively afraid to open the piano for fear of attracting any more of "Rosie's" friends, who may have forgotten the number of the house, and who are frequently seen cruising about the street in cabs, and "trying" houses here and there at hazard.

Yesterday, there being too much frost to hunt, Mrs Merridew and I paid "Robin visits" to

the poor in their cottages, and I was very much impressed in particular by the fortitude and resignation of one old Darby and Joan, who had thoughtfully despatched their three daughters—the three prettiest girls in the whole village, Mrs Merridew said—to seek their fortunes in London, whilst they remained by the log fire-side and philosophically smoked two little clay pipes, and awaited remittances. Their patient wisdom, added to their staunch refusal to go out hop-picking or into the poorhouse, afforded convincing proofs of their being distinctly above the insipid average of contemporaneous rustic intellect, I thought. They had already heard from the eldest and the youngest of the girls, too. The one, who wrote on the grey-headed notepaper of the Carlton, said she knew they would be delighted to hear that she had struck a cheap place for afternoon tea; but had not yet succeeded in obtaining regular employment, though she diligently answered all the advertisements daily. Nevertheless, she enclosed them two sovereigns, which she picked up in the Strand, she said; whilst the other, who had been fortunate enough to drop into an immediate engagement as a "classifier and assorter of new odours" at a big perfumer's in Bond Street,

wrote to say that she was temporarily suspended from duty on account of a slight polypus in the nose, and was recruiting at Brighton; but she sent "dear old daddy a fiver" out of her first week's salary, and a dear little hall-marked spittoon from Thornhill's. Is it not a pretty picture? Filial love among people of moderate means is always an agreeable sight, I think; but unhappily this picture has a reverse side. A son also had been sent up to London with what few pounds the old people could scrape together, but he was so manifestly unfit to have the care of cash that he had lent it to a gentleman he met at the Criterion to start a livery stable in Venice with, a sickening piece of folly which he had followed up by marrying a young woman, whom almost anybody who takes in *The Queen* or *The Gentlewoman* could instantly recognise as the Tight Fit Corset Company's model. Old Joan's hair turned white in a single hour, they say, after going to the cottage door one night to let in a prodigal family of seven—two grown people and five small children under the age of six, the youngest of whom had only joined the party shortly after the beginning of the long tramp from the metropolis. Beyond imparting an appearance of legitimacy to the

five small children, the young man did not seem to cut any figure, and the conviction influencing the mature minds of the old folks with regard to him to-day is chiefly relative to the unfortunateness of his sex, and might be expressed in a few words, which, though plain and simple, do not admit of reproduction. Of course it is deadly dull down here; still if it be true that men can easily overlook a plain face if only it be accompanied by a symmetrical limb, I know of no foreign bathing resort that offers greater facilities to the well-developed girl than this Hampshire of ours in February, with its brave ploughed fields, its magnificently muddy lanes, and its apparently quite unnegotiable stiles. A well-cut tan boot, surmounted by a nicely filled article of lisle thread and silk, either all one colour or with vertical stripes, can scarcely fail to turn the head of anything able to raise whiskers, from the host himself down to the most casual guest, and, interest once secured, a pretty contrast and fresh food for speculation may be supplied by changing into a fine black transparent lisle, with lace fronts, for evening wear.

And now, dear, with regard to your going to your first Dramatic Ball. It is only natural that you should "feel bound to support theatrical

charities," since you were born at a benefit matinee — something caused the "sunlight" to fall from the centre of the roof into the crowded pit, and your lamented mamma was not prepared for shocks, so the story goes—and I know of none more deserving than this. Its foundation is due, I have been told, to Miss Nellie Causton pointing out to the Lord Chamberlain that if the stars of the theatrical firmament could only be induced (by closing the theatres) to celebrate Ash Wednesday in a proper manner, it would make the austerity and sobriety of the rest of Lent a matter of absolute necessity; and so thoroughly do her male patrons seem to have entered into the devotional spirit which actuated her, that, to judge from the thirst they bring with them, they must eat about a couple of tons of salt fish apiece on Shrove Tuesday.

But in the matter of making your own frock I scarcely know how to advise you, as none of the things which you say you have by you—the soiled canary silk lamp-shade, the purple brocade robe which your aunt bought two years ago at Oberammergau of Pontius Pilate, and the nipped tucks of batiste which have not yet come home from the laundry—can be said to serve the purpose extremely well. I should think your

sister Blanche might lend you her washing silk: surely if she has cyanosis as badly as you say she must be growing rather weary of pale blue tints, especially as it is a shade which will not, as she seems to suppose, "take" the twine tone which alone would make it a pretty contrast for her own wear. As a *débutante* you must certainly carry a bouquet of some sort, though flowers wither so very quickly at a ball—especially a Dramatic Ball. An excellent idea, and one that finds much favour with drawing-room belles, is to start with two or three simple pink rosebuds, the stems of which are deftly inserted into the neck of a small, long glass bottle, two-thirds filled with rain water, and secreted in the centre of the bosom, beneath the corset. A well-developed girl—and I may at once say that this need not be attempted by those who have fronts which only call up visions of Saul's dream of the seven years of famine—should experience no difficulty in concealing a bottle of the size generally known as a "split soda"; then, as the night proceeds, and the water in the dainty improvised hot-house becomes tropical, the buds go off one by one with a surprised little "pop!" and unfold into glorious and exquisitely fresh roses. But be careful that the bottle does not become reversed. *Apropos* of low necks, I shall

not soon forget, dear, the agonised little yell of a beautiful dineress here who carelessly allowed a little gob of her *sorbet au kirsch* to slip off her spoon and wiggle down the interior of her much-admired corsage, the other evening. Like all things that are extremely cold, the icy *sorbet* is "a devil to nestle," as Charlie would say, and the way the fair sufferer brought her elbows and her pretty alabaster shoulders forward with a sudden jerk and a muttered "Christophe Colomb!" reminded one of a poor Mongolian at the moment of his being coarsely bayoneted below the belt. Hats, dear, are to be larger than ever, whilst the best-cut skirts are tighter round the top and much fuller round the bottom—which may sound like a paradox to a mere man, but which *you* will understand quite perfectly, I feel sure.

Whether you wilfully avoided clarity when enquiring for the source of several little sets of rhymes the other day, of course I do not know, but *please*, Madge, do not again say that *I* suggested that you would probably come across the nursery poem about little Cain waking up in the night and addressing certain childish observations to Adam, winding up with—

"So if it's all the same to Ma,
Make me a rocking-horse, please Pa."

—in Mr Andrew Lang's "Blue Poetry Book," because I most emphatically did nothing of the kind. As a matter of fact I have never even seen the book.—Your loving cousin,

MAUDE.

MARS

MOUNT STREET MANSIONS,
WEDNESDAY.

SWEET COUSIN,—

Do you ever, I wonder, when you glance over the "Agony Column" of the evening newspaper, pause to consider whether you know, or are known to any of the queer creatures who carry on the agonised correspondences which appear in that column at tenpence per line? I must confess that *I* do, and when, three or four months ago, I encountered the following in the "Special" *Standard*—

> IF THE TALL dark gentleman in the Colorado-claro coloured billycock who was smoking a Roman cigar with a straw spinal column in the Café Monico on Tuesday night would like to communicate with the blonde young lady whose escort wanted to fight the waiter over the smell of the Limburger, he may do so by making an appointment with FANNIE B., care of Jelly's Library, Shaftesbury Avenue, W.

I had a strange presentiment that it emanated from Fannie Bruce, the tall girl that used to

come to the Continental, and who claimed to be a direct descendant of the Scottish King who used to drink till he saw spiders. And yesterday's proceedings in the Divorce Court proved my guess to be perfectly correct: in the suit of *Biffer* v. *Biffer and Bilkins,* Fannie was the respondent, the "tall dark gentleman of the Colorado-claro billycock" was Mr Bilkins, the co-respondent, and poor old Biffer, the fighter of waiters, the elderly masher who happened to be a patient at the nursing home where Fannie "trained," and who was nourished and fostered back to health by her after he had been nearly cut to ribbons by Saffron Hill Italians for following one of their young women back from midnight mass—the surgeons put no less than seventeen stitches in his poor rennet alone, Fannie once told me—was the typically vindictive petitioner. He appears to have been a little more wideawake than Fannie thought him, and he went into the witness-box and conducted his own case with some ability, I thought—and a couple of old maids who sat giggling in the front row of the gallery evidently thought so too. By the way, dear, could there be any better type of the height of incongruity than an old maid taking a devouring interest in

the proceedings of a Divorce Court? Really some old maids are past all bearing, as Dr Bull observes somewhere in one of his justly famous works.

The attachment between the respondent and himself, the petitioner deposed, sprang up in the nursing establishment in Wimbeck Street, where the respondent came to his room every night, took his temperature and his cigaroots, advised him to "buck up," left him a humorous book called "Salad for the Solitary," and went away. At first he entertained only a feeling of gratitude towards her, but this ripened into deep affection on the night when he had been eating "seedy-cake" in the bed, and she volunteered to clear out the crumbs and make him "comfy." (Laughter, which was instantly suppressed). On his leaving the hospital he lost sight of respondent for fully two months, and he next ran across her quite accidentally at Victoria Station, when she rushed him for a bottle of Pommery, a turquoise bracelet, a two-guinea pair of boots, and a half-sovereign "ready" before he'd even asked her where she was living. (Renewed laughter. His lordship said that if the unseemly disturbance was repeated he should order the gallery to be cleared. It was a court of justice, not a theatre).

Petitioner, continuing, said that on the following morning he purchased a special licence, and, on the day after that, they were married by a Registrar, he, the petitioner, being under the impression that the respondent's abominable unattractiveness would keep her involuntarily faithful. For a short time they were supremely happy, in fact, said the petitioner, "No man in that court was fonder of his wife than he was." (Loud and prolonged cheering, during which his lordship directed the officials to clear the gallery). Silence being restored, the petitioner said his suspicions with regard to the respondent were first aroused on the night of their visiting Brighton, when, he not knowing how to switch off the electric lights in their bedroom, she, with great alacrity, proceeded to show him. His thoughts on that matter kept him awake all night, and from that time he began to observe his wife somewhat closely. He discovered that she had a remarkably fine figure, though he subsequently ascertained that this discovery was shared by others.

His lordship, interposing, asked what was the date of this discovery.

The petitioner regretted that he had not kept a note of the date, but his attention was shortly

afterwards drawn to the "Tall dark gentleman" advertisement, and to others in the same column of the same newspaper, which he would now submit to his lordship. They were as follows :—

NOSER'S DETECTIVES.—Great Success in Divorce. Courts Crowded. Co-respondents in attendance Day and Night.

NOSER'S DETECTIVES.—Decrees Nisi a speciality. Try our Judicial Separations, with or without Alimony.

NOSER'S DETECTIVES for getting at the bed-rock of marital infidelities. Was he sitting up, as he said, with a sick friend? Did madame spend the whole afternoon on the slab in the Turkish? Detectives disguised as hospital nurses; lady detectives in bath towels.—Telegraphic address, "Doggoh, London."

Acting on the information obtained by this firm, petitioner said, he instituted the present proceedings. The respondent then entered the witness-box, and was cross-examined by the petitioner.

Her age, she said, was twenty-five and not fifty-two, as stated by the petitioner. She had been twice secretly married, though she did not think it necessary to disclose the fact at the time of meeting the petitioner. Her first husband was "doing seven years, and it ought to have been seventy." Her second was out in Texas some-

where, and had not been heard from for some time. In his last letter he asked that bygones might be bygones, and that she would take him back, but she did not feel that she could receive him since he had, by his own admission, been recently tarred and feathered. She had always been under the impression that a wife, when deserted, had the right to re-marry as often as she pleased. She had never considered "Salad for the Solitary" an improper book to place in the hands of a patient suffering from a lacerated rennet, nor did she remember such a passage in it as :

> "In the astonishment and rapture of Morna's confession of love for him, Hildebrand so far forgot the discrepancy between the property of his steward and himself as to lean forward and imprint a hot kiss upon the back of her swanlike neck. Morna, on her part, was utterly overcome, and fell to the ground in a swoon. And so the long day wore on."

Continuing, the respondent said she had never played at "weighing butter" and did not know that any such game existed. The fragment of torn letter produced was in her handwriting ; she generally wrote to her friends in cryptograms, but could not say to whom this one had been addressed. It was then translated and read :—

" 3cc
K89j
9
1flc4 and 83m5
fm5icff b54
2lk
6fi
K85 and 6ffc
fi45i9e7
Jg9e7 and fe9fej
9e
K85 and j3c34;
fecp and 63e1p
453i,
53K9e7
fe9fe-j3c34j
fe-and-3
8fe5pdffe!

63ee95

—"all
this
I
could have
overlooked
but
for
the fool
ordering
Spring onions
in
the salad;
only fancy,
dear,
eating
onion salads
on a
honeymoon!

FANNIE."

The co-respondent then went into the box and was cross-examined. He had never been within one mile of the Café Monico in his life, he said, and did not even know where it was. On the date on which the petitioner charged him with meeting the respondent he happened, as the doctor's certificate, which had been filed, would show, to be undergoing inoculation for tuberculosis, from the effects of which he collapsed and died on the following Sunday, on which day he was also tried, sentenced, and guillotined for a

murder in the Rue Morgue, in Paris, which he never committed, and he was further prepared to put into the box three independent witnesses who got him out of the top of a tree on Plumstead Marshes, and could swear that he was trying flying-machines all day with Mr Maxim, whilst, at the very hour in the evening fixed by the petitioner, he was, he regretted to say, being scalped and disembowelled in a side-show at the Earl's Court Exhibition for rubbing noses with, and so introducing epithelioma into, the Red Dog Tribe of Indians.

So mean and contemptible a defence is, happily, I think, seldom heard, but when the craven wretch (who really would have flown the country, I am told, on being served with the citation, but that he was too agitated to pack his trunk) began to plead alternative defences, including Infancy, the Gaming Act, connivance on the part of the petitioner, Trover, also that he did not know the respondent was a married woman, and the Statute of Limitations, poor Fannie was so mortified that great salt tears of indignation stood in her "big, brown, bedroom eyes"—as Byron says, somewhere—and she sobbed something about being dash-blanked if she wouldn't almost sooner have been charged with simple desertion,

like some poor soppy, ungingered school-girl than have come before the courts with such a "Co." I cannot truthfully say that I was greatly disappointed on going back after the luncheon interval to find that the court was full and that we could not get in, but the subsequent non-suiting of the petitioner—which, I must tell you, little one, means that the horrid old judge has slapped the harness on them again, unless they can stir up a legal fossil called the King's Proctor and induce him to get the Act repealed, or declared ungrammatical, or something—will be a sad thing for Fannie, with her other opportunities. Still, while she fraternises with such horned cattle as the Monico masher, she is denied the right to bellow when gored. Silly? Why, as the immortal Sally Slapcabbage once remarked: "I'd as soon think of travelling alone in a first-class carriage on the Underground with a clergyman, that I would!"

You can scarcely realise, dear, what an intense relief it was to get away from the mausolean odour and oppressiveness of those awful courts, and, with the lamps lit and one's corset removed, to sit over a glowing fire of Baltic billets, and compare the sordid procedure of the Strand with the far pleasanter Confucian forms in vogue in

Yokohama, and Kobe, and in Tokio. For, as dear old Sir Edwin tells us in "All *Mi-Ai* and Afterwards," even in that fair land of tea-shops and all-day tutti-frutti, duplicity not infrequently raises its hideous head, and the rattle of the handful of gravel on the window-pane is not entirely unknown—indeed he is good enough to give us a literal translation of the three brief, but significant letters which constituted the whole of the "exhibits" in the undefended and untried suit of Kamekichi *versus* Kamekichi and Sokichi-Yamamoto, which tell their own story, I think, eloquently enough. The proceedings were opened by the aggrieved husband, with this :—

"To Sokichi-Yamamoto,

"Greeting,

"This is to tell you, Sokichi, that it is discovered to me that you have sinned more gravely than he who crosseth a rectangular field diagonally, or he that passeth behind a sleeping cat; you have been guilty of improperly loving my wife, Tsune Azumamura Kamekichi, without asking me first—although I am told you have referred to me freely enough, when, later in the evening, you were describing the proceedings to your asylum acquaintances. It is a business which has caused me several keen intestinal pangs, Sokichi, but please to understand that right here is where it is all going to stop. Unless I receive from you before lighting-up time—sunset is arranged for 6.37. P.M—fourteen millions of yens* in a green silk

* At the present rate of exchange, about thirteen and tenpence.

sack, I propose to forward Tsune, together with a duly-executed deed of transfer, to you, as per VII and VIII Mik, *cap* 33, 35, and 37, down to the bottom. For, think you, Sokichi, I shall stand meekly by in sheeply dumbness, like a mutton before the shearer, while you monkey with my lily-of-the-valley, my star-of-the-garden? Think you, Sokichi-Yamamoto (for I observe that you have incurred the hyphen) that I shall tolerate you to sip the sweetness of my heavenly pomegranate while I die a lingering death of thirst on the tow-path? Not on your tintype, Sokichi, not on your little tintype!

"Thine

"Fujikawa Kamekichi, J.C.C."*

As it is not necessary for the married Jap who has got a "lead pipe cinch" on his erring mate to appeal to any tribunal whatsoever, the guilty co-respondent who finds such a letter as the foregoing in his morning mail, either makes arrangements to have the writer of it privately poisoned during the next ten hours, or resignedly accepts the situation, merely telling the mistress of his boarding-house to put another pillow on his bolster as a laidifriend of his is about to "come to stay," as the editor says of the new snide monthly; but Sokichi tried for a middle course, and wrote:—

"To Fujikawa Kamekichi, Esq., J.C.C., etc.

"Grovelling,

"The miserable house servant who brings you this writing and

* Japan County Council, clearly.

tarries until you kindly say what shall my future be—whether I do remain here and become your footstool or whether I do efface myself from this pleasant island and tour in China as far as my vital organs hold out—shall moreover tell you that I am more ashamed over that which I have did than is the farmyard female fowl of feminine gender who has foregone her appointments, etc., in order to sit for six weeks on the profitless tin dog of the farmer's small child. But the thing is indisputably true, and I live only on the desperate chance of awakening in your large heart some stray glint of merciful forgiveness. Alas! the fourteen millions of yens I have not—may yellow dogs defile my progenitor's grave if I have! or, better still, you can search me—though heaven knows I have hustled. Immediately on receipt of your favour, I wired Cork Street and paid reply, but presumably the names were not good enough; all the same, I do not deserve nor desire to acquire sole rights in Tsune, your lily-of-the-valley, the star-of-your-little-garden-with-a-gait-on. Forgive her, forgive us both, Fuj, old man; no evil will endure a hundred years.

"Sorrowfully thine,

"Sokichi Yamamoto."

But old man Kamekichi never could eat hot buns at tea-time; the small, simple dish of Pekoe was all he asked, so back to Sokichi-Yamamoto came the following:—

"To Sokichi-hyphen-Yamamoto,

"Notakingany.

"Yours of even date lies before me, in more senses than one. I should like to have, at your convenience, the address of the apothecary's where you get your nerve tonic, but the rest of your prospectus is too attenuated to stand starch. Re Tsune Azumamura Kamekichi: I regret your inability to con-

nect with Cork Street, and you will probably regret it yourself before—

> The frost is on the pum'kin
> An' the fodder's in the shock.'

—but that is *your* little piece of pigeon, Sokichi, all your own, yours entirely. Meantime I beg to enclose your duly-executed transfer-note, bill of lading, inventory, and all other proprietary scrip in her, and the carman bringing this will hand you Tsune herself, on whom all transmission charges are prepaid. Please sign Forwarding Co.'s delivery-sheet in the space opposite number thirteen and oblige,

"Yours in tall glasses,

"F. K."

And that is how Mrs Fujikawa became Mrs Sokichi-Yamamoto, without scandal or paying the difference, and when the correspondence was in due course laid before the great Mikado, who is himself the topmost blossom on the highest branch of the ever-blooming shrub of exotic courtesy, he smiled so approvingly that the proper functionary of the Imperial household instantly promulgated an iman, or an irade, or whatever it is, calling for three cheers and a tiger throughout the flowery empire.

It is very sweet indeed of you, to give me the opportunity of joining your Boat Race party, and I have everything necessary to such an outing by me—including the very latest thing

from Rosedale's, dear, a positively delightful little marine glass, which unscrews for sherry and curaçoa, and holds over a pint and a half! —but poor Charlie is in a great tangle over drawing up a prospectus, and I have promised to stay at home on Saturday and assist him. In the early days of the automobile craze he brought out, I must tell you, a horseless horse-radish, made of desiccated potatoes and aqua-fortis, and put up in shilling jars, but, poor fellow! he had not the unlimited cash that is needed nowadays in pure food advertising, and, as the last jar of the horse-radish we opened had an aroma that was more like a Saturday-to-Monday in Constantinople than anything else, the huge quantity of the stuff stored in the stables in Davies Street will turn out a clear loss unless we can put it on the market as a corn eradicator, or a hair-restorer, or a new corpulency cure. Charlie is distinctly in favour of the latter, as stout persons, he says, are less quarrelsome when deceived than slim ones, whilst the price at which the remedy will be offered to the public will place it beyond the reach of the needy, who are apt to be resentful if not cured with one bottle. So Charlie is not without resource, you see, although, like many old public

schoolboys, he cannot spell even a little bit—certainly not well enough to draw up a circular of directions and testimonials, for instance, "dizzeezez," for "diseases" would scarcely pass muster even amongst persons who read all medical advertising matter hurriedly. The "directions for use," by the way, I have already drawn up with that delightful ambiguity which is the sheet-anchor of most proprietary medicines. They are :—

DIRECTIONS : *Fill bath, or bath-tub, two-thirds full of the remedy ; then get in gently and order favourite books and newspapers ; also meals to be brought regularly. Continue till satisfied.*

—THE INVENTOR.

Charlie declares he is delighted, and can already see us making monkeys of some of the present advertising impostors ; as soon as this happens, dear, I will be re-photographed with a tiara of diamonds over my front hair and waved at the sides.—Your's for shifting the white man's burden, MAUDE.

AVRIL

The Hutch, Dullingham,
Near Newmarket,
Monday Evening.

Dearest Little Madge,—

Whenever I come down here for the racing I generally leave my correspondence severely behind me, but your apparent despondency inclines me to waive my rule. You really have no good reason that *I* can discover to "reproach yourself" over the loss of your "Lady Day boy," as you term your ex-mash, but of course there is no constitutional rule to prevent your doing so. A little reproach in the spring of the year does one good, I think, if one does not take cold after it. But be sure that you get Dr Rumble's Reproach Drops—at any of the Haymarket chemists—and I should think you could do with a No. 19. Somehow, dear, I never quite cottoned to your "Lady Day boy," and I have therefore no regrets to express at

the probability of my never meeting him again. He was no thoroughbred, as I whispered to you that night at Romano's when he marched round the waiter's wagon with the soup tureen on his head and a stick of celery, from the next people's table, in his hand, under the impression that he was a trooper in the Blues on guard at Whitehall; and when you tell me that, at the Café Royal the other night, he calmly proceeded, when the fish was served, to eat the buttered paper which enclosed the red mullet, well—that's where he "made an egregious of himself," as the talented historian says of Charles the First. If the truth could only be ascertained, I wonder what he *really* was, Madge.

Do you remember the Honourable Paul Northbank once admitting that when he was hard up he used to tell the "dear little souls" that he was a gentleman's valet, as apart from this accounting for his nicely cut clothes, it was in many ways more convenient and agreeable to seem quite a decent sort of servant than a comparatively impecunious swell? Still, even a gentleman's servant would know better than to eat buttered paper. It is always in some *small* matter, some scarcely perceptible detail, that the man who is not strictly of *le haut ton*

puts the crape band on his aspirations. He is certain to display the one touch of vulgar impulsion, the momentary want of repose, by which even a well-trained servant can distinguish the true peacock from the jackdaw with the hand-painted tail. And this leads me to speak of a certain friend of Lena Hutchinson's, a Mr Wilkinson Fitch, who, though already married, I believe, to some highly cultured and doubtless delightfully intellectual creature, only really *lives* on the one or two evenings in the month in which he contrives to dine quietly with Lena in a private room at Juniori's. Talk about your problem plays, Madge! why, if the crimson flock and gold-stamped paper on the walls of the pokey little private rooms at Juniori's, which look out upon the squalors of Soho, could only speak, they would put forward more knotted social cat's-cradles in one night than the whole army of dramatists and playwrights could invent in a month of Sundays! Poor human nature! Why was a weak, vacillating duffer like Adam, with his miserable little two-ounce bottle of ineffectual serpent antidote, entrusted with the manorial rights of such a place as Eden? Surely St Patrick was the man that was wanted, not Adam?

Anyway, Lena (whose life is colourless and monotonous enough at home) and this Mr Fitch simply *exist* for the sake of these bi-weekly gatherings; and on this particular evening of which she was telling me, her truant lover probably thought she looked more seductively beautiful than ever. The ruby tints that Juniori's blood-red lampshades threw upon Lena's cheeks and neck must have made her perfectly irresistible; and when the waiter came up to take away the soup-plates, he found the badly-hit Fitch's *consommé* positively untasted. But a private-room waiter is selected mainly for his discretion, and Alphonse, without remark, substituted the fish for the soup, and closed the door noiselessly behind him. Never was a *filet sole* served better; no finer bottle of '74 *Chablis Moutonne* ever came to table, but Wilkinson had eyes and appetite only for Lena. He plied her with the glorious wine—nor did he forget his own glass—and felt himself the most fortunate fellow in the world. Finally, his feelings got the better of him, and, rising from the table, and upsetting his chair as he did so, he drew Lena from her seat, flung his strong arms around her and covered her with kisses—hot, passionate kisses that he could hold not an instant longer.

It was a feast of love, such as only a poet of passion could properly write up, but——

Just at that instant the door opened, almost without emitting a sound, and there stood Alphonse with an expression of unbounded surprise and *the Côtelettes de Ris de Veau, pointes d'Asperges!*

Of course, it was a perfectly *awful* situation for Lena, who can never possibly go to Juniori's again, and Mr Fitch was scarcely less disconcerted. But dignity had to be maintained at all cost, and, as nothing but a particularly steep bluff could restore it, Mr Fitch glared at the waiter and demanded:

"At what are you gaping, *misérable?* Have you never witnessed anything of this sort before?"

"Oh yais, many *many* times, sare," replied the epicurean waiter, "but——" and here he shrugged his shoulders contemptuously, as though he, as well as the matchless cuisine, had received a personal affront——"but nevair yet *beta-ween ze poisson and ze entrée*, nevair!"

This wretched insinuation—that they were mere silly *sans culottes*, or bank-holidayites on the razzle-dazzle, rather than members of the smart set in unusually exuberant spirits—was far

more humiliating, Lena said, than the *contretemps* itself.

So you are subpœnaed as a witness in a divorce case, are you? Well, dear, one can always derive amusement and profit, I think, by listening to the ingenious, not to say the ingenuous, stories unfolded in the Palais de Justice that stands in the dear old Strand. And then, too, the pure novelty of the thing is a delight in itself, as the young bride remarked when the new bridegroom elected to honeymoon at Rome instead of the Métropole at Brighton. To you, who are a sweet, bright girl (though your parents, I have been told, wished for a boy), there could not fail to be a great store of rich mental refreshment in the artless tale of the co-respondent, who seeks to impress the jury with the idea that he lacks about a year of knowing anything; in the fresh, frank, righteous indignation of the petitioner, who tells how he has twice ballasted the unsophisticated co-respondent aforesaid with bird shot; and in the demure protests of the beautiful respondent herself, who, according to her own version, has been so absolutely straight during her brief married life, that she has barely kept out of the local asylum for idiots. Only a little while ago I heard a case tried there in

which the "Co." was no Joseph, but a florid gentleman, with a bald head and a beetling stomach, who, it appeared, went down to pay a dine-and-sleep visit in the country, and was by the charming respondent pressed so hard to remain that the creases still remained in the suit of clothing he was then wearing, and he tendered them as evidence. For some inscrutable reason, by the way, the story of a woman's backsliding is always pointed by a stern moral and a pair of trousers. Then the fair, but doubtless frail, respondent entered the box, and "went" red-handed for her whilom partner. She first denied *in toto* the allegations he had made against her, and then pleaded, in the alternative, that if she had ever shown any partiality to superfluous and unlawful males it was a sort of contagious disorder which she had inherited from the petitioner's mother. To give fuller effect to this pretty defence, she took care never to mention the old lady's name without reaching for her *Eau de Cologne* bottle and carefully spraying herself. But she had a dense, unsentimental jury to deal with, and an equally unimpressionable judge, so that the petitioner got his decree *nisi*, also judgment against the co-respondent for £40,000, with which, I am told, he intends to

retire to a large residential limekiln on the banks of the Rhine as soon as he can collect it—the money, of course, not the limekiln.

In another suit—a wife's petition this time—the respondent awoke in the middle of the night to find that he was alone. Just then, hearing a noise in the hall below, and not knowing, he said, that his wife had gone down with the key of the tantalus, he advanced to the head of the stairs and fired two charges of buckshot at the white-robed figure below. Upon investigation he found that he had missed the petitioner but had fatally wounded a prize fox-terrier worth quite twenty pounds, and put out the left eye of a terra-cotta bust of Dr Joseph Parker, which, as it came out in evidence, the co-respondent had long used as a hat-stand. But a truce to other women's troubles; broken hearts have often been tinkered and repaired till they proved to be in better trim than they were in the beginning.

Have I ever, I wonder, spoken to you of my deep and implacable belief in fortune-telling? I daresay, dear, you have yourself encountered many, many social and domestic problems far too complicated and involved for any sort of human casuistry—mysteries indeed that could only be unravelled by cutting the cards? Now, over the

dinner-table last night, somèbody happened to mention the fact that a tribe of gipsies had pitched upon some waste land on the road to Cambridge, so, this afternoon, I and dear Lady Mabel Mountsheraton—who is in great distress of mind at being unable, after riding all her husband's horses to a standstill, to form an acquaintance with any young sporting nobleman who will mount her *pour le bon motif*. I may add that she has persistently begged M. to let her go to South or to Dollar and buy even a moderate hack, but he has told her, rather curtly, she may go to Helfurst, and, though we have looked in all the directories, we cannot find a dealer of that name.—I wonder if *you* may be able to give us his address? probably he is a German—drove over in the dog-cart, by way of Six Mile Bottom, to find them. And what Mother Lee, a quaint old mummy of a creature, with feet that constantly robbed each other of the right of way, and a costume representing a hand-to-hand contest to a finish between the primary colours, told us, for half-a-sovereign apiece, was simply marvellous! Let those who rail at superstition and scoff at all phenomena produced by supernatural agency do so, dear, but believe me, every word that this venerable sorceress of Six Mile Bottom told us

was as true as—I was about to write "gospel," but feeling that, after all, the simile is not very convincing, I will substitute as true as that all girls are born with—say, noses; a fact, I feel sure, the most captious will not dispute.

Don't imagine, dear, that I am going to fill my letter with one half that she said of *me*. Indeed, if I did so you would only exclaim, "But this is not mere palmistry; this is *It!*" And, truly, it was. First asking me not to be offended if she spoke too candidly, she told me that I was of slightly erotic temperament, but of great intellectual strength, by which any morbid activity was successfully checked. I was impulsive, generous, forgiving, tactful, shapely, sanitary, wholly unselfish, and should "pull through if I only kept my fly-trap shut"—those, dear, were her own crude, unvarnished words. There was a "spade" man who meant me no good; still he could plot no wrong to me so long as I never missed my last 'bus and continued to use paraffin for my hair. Mabel's forecast was, upon the whole, not so cheering. No less than seven men were entangled in her life, and one of them would shortly sleep in an imposing building with turrets to it. Mabel had just previously told me—even as we waited

for the old gipsy—that an old friend who had been very, *very* good to her was daily expecting to be taken to Holloway by her inexorable modiste, although the horrid thing had had hundreds and hundreds of pounds, and that some of the prices she had charged were positively *monstrous*. This bad news quite depressed poor Mabel for, as she said, there were so many new things that she wanted quite urgently that she simply *dare* not ask M. for. Before we came away, however, Mother Lee made Mabel a little happier by assuring her that before many moons had waned she would receive a long letter—illustrated—from a "heart" man across the sea; that she would presently be on a slightly better peace-footing with her husband's relations, and that, ultimately, she would get anything else that was coming to her.

Newmarket is rather dull at night, but it would have been distinctly more so had I not by sheer accident come across a most merry little book, evidently the property of some man, and which had been left behind in the drawer of the wash-stand. It resembles a commonplace birthday book in that it is ruled off into little spaces for people to sign their names in, but the mottoes in those spaces are far more homely and familiar than the stilted quotations from classic authors,

generally met with in this kind of work. Let me offer you a few selections—some of the men's texts and some of the girls'— taken quite at random :

Jany. 13. Piccadilly's always good enough for *me.* Here have I been ten months in the Transvaal getting sunburnt and sober; now I'm going to get pale and putrid again.

E. Roberts-Wegg, Lieut. Impl. Yeoy.

Feby. 22. So King Arthur set out to find the Holy Grail, full of misgiving about Guinevere, and more than half inclined to chuck crusading up. For in those days the ladies of the court had nothing to read, and no healthy girl could be expected to embroider *all* the time.

Daisy De Lorne Carrington.

Mch. 12. The authority you quote for wearing your dress-suit always after six P.M. does not mean to imply that you should do so after retiring.

Hildebrand Hobson, N.C.P.

April 4. Whereat Farmer Chawbacon replied that he didn't know nothing about givin' references, but as to her character for truth and veracity, she ever was a liar from a babby, and as to her veracity, why, some said as she did and some said as she didn't.

Blanche Gwendoline Treadwater.

May 15. I must remind you that the regular settling day over the City and Suburban is long past; I should be sorry if you forced me to post you as a defaulter at Tattersall's.

Ernest W. Burton-Botts, F.I.J.

June 8. Oh, don't let my being a married woman worry you, my pippin—we need never meet *him*. Save when he comes in to dress for dinner he is hardly ever in the house, and *we* are not likely to haunt the Empire.

Lena Delaprè Batterbush.

July 29. Sir Francis said that more shameful conduct than that of the co-respondent had never polluted the annals of that court.

Clement W. Dryfoogle.

Augst. 16. I'm positively sick of diamonds; if you *must* give me something I would rather have some cambric pocket-handkerchiefs or an electro-plated toast-rack.

Duckie de Vere, Gaiety Theatre.

I am sure you will be keenly interested to learn, dear, that poor Charlie has at last a really "big thing" on the *tapis*, nothing less, let me tell you, than a scheme to utilise the now wasted phosphorescent illuminating power that exists in water. The different ways in which water may be used as an illuminant are practically unlimited: it will not be long, Charlie says, before the practical scientist will do everything with water except drink it. My dreams of entertaining royalty may be realised yet!

What recipe shall I send you this month? Would you like to try this preserve of potato peelings? it is an excellent substitute for dearer

jams, etc., whilst any that is left over after all are satisfied may be used in the stables as an infallible veterinary remedy for cracked heels. It is not difficult to make, once the art of controlling the fermentation is mastered :—

> Of fresh potato-peelings take as many as would fill a middling-sized cow, and boil down with two quarts of nouilles, a little all-spice, a teaspoonful of Cannabis Indica, and anything else that takes the eye. Boil about four hours. When cool, strain off, flavour to taste, and store. You will readily ascertain if fermentation takes place, as the jars will then explode ; in which event scrape up carefully and re-pot.

I advise you to make some, dear ; and, at the same time, if your friends know how to hold your head in a bucket of water for a few minutes without being found out, they will save themselves a world of sickness and indigestion.—Ever your loving cousin,

MAUDE.

MAI

Mount Street Mansions,
Saturday.

My Dear Little Cousin,—

I daresay you have been wondering why you have not had a line from me lately? Do you know, dear, I have been going to write to you over and over again, but—well, please take the will for the deed, as the poor relation said at the Christmas party when the wealthy uncle playfully affixed the mistletoe to the tails of his coat.

To tell you the truth, little one, I have been much worried about poor Charlie, who has been *dreadfully* ill, in which circumstances writing letters and eating carpet-tacks have been both alike to me, as dear Mrs Humphry Ward says. It all came about, dear, through his imprudently patronising a new barber, who, in a zealous endeavour to please a fresh customer, shaved my poor darling so closely that when his sharp,

bristly new beard started it had to grow out of the skin through new holes, and so brought on a very obstinate and painful affection of the cuticle. And, goodness knows, the poor fellow was in trouble enough before this, seeing that the horrid financiers in the City absolutely refused to underwrite his syndicate for bringing out his latest and really most marvellous invention, the "B.-P. Bonnet Pin"—"B.-P.", I should add, on account of its great resourcefulness, for, with it, any lady, young or old, can fasten her hat on, secure a door, pick the kernels out of Brazil or other nuts, hold a burglar or a broken sashline up, start a jibbing horse, secure entomological specimens, tap a dropsical friend, or remove fluff and accumulated cotton abrasions from a sewing-machine. But they wouldn't have it; and I really do begin to think with Charlie that it is easier for the proverbial camel to go through the knee of the idol than to float *anything* in these dull times. In consequence of all this trouble, Madge, you can understand why we have kept but little company, although dear Major Murgatroyd, who scabbarded his tulwar and went into the wine business just before the outbreak of the war, has been staying with us, and keeps us well posted in the technicalities of the fighting. He must really be a

heavy loss to the army, for he is evidently a great military engineer, and, given the right kind of stores and ammunition, would cheerfully undertake to fortify Houndsditch against the Hebrews. He himself has said so.

But, despite our early reverses in the Transvaal, the Major is not more incensed against Mr Kruger than he is against the braggart, pro-Boer Duc d'Orleans, whom he would cheerfully fight at any sporting club which would give a reasonable purse and protection from police interference. And what, after all, Madge, can be tougher than to catch an uncrowned Royal head doing a dirty act? What can be more depressing than to find your once favourite Dauphin playing the elementary chump, the pale green jay? Not that there is the least likelihood of Philippe's ever sitting in the imperial gilt chair at Versailles, for, as the Major says, he hasn't got the brains to fill it—plump as he is.

Whom do you suppose I ran up against at the Exhibition the other night? But, there, you would never guess, so I will tell you—Minnie Maddern — that sickeningly affected creature who used to live in the rooms above my old ones in Somerset Street; the girl who wrote to the correspondence editor of *The*

Family Doctor on reading Heine's dictum—"No man reaches his highest mental and moral stature till he has surrendered part of his *ego* to the controlling influence of a woman," to ask him to be good enough to tell what *ego* was the "medico's Latin for!" She was passing as a widow, she told me, because her "boy," who had an incurable mania for big game shooting, left for Nevada last summer to look for a grizzly; and as she hasn't heard of him since August, she has come to the conclusion that the bear saw him first. So, if she be not a widow, perhaps I had better designate her, as dear Arthur Roberts did Edie Merton's sister, when he told her fortune by the cards at the Dramatic Club Ball.

"Now let me see," he observed, as, with brows knit, he began to lay out the pack; "One, two, three—a letter—to the house—you will have a letter—it will contain bad news—ha!—you have a sister—she is a 'diamond' lady—very fair—the bad news will be about her—she will shortly become a widow."

"I—er—I—I ought to mention," stammered Edie, "that she's—er—not exactly *married* to the gentleman with—er—with whom——"

"Quite so. I was about to say she will become

a *widowette!;*" and surely, dear, if "novelette" and "pantalette," why not widowette?

Anyway, Minnie Maddern and her "poor boy's" short spell of married life consisted mainly of a prolonged tussle with the few trustful tradespeople left round High Street, Marylebone, and the only ready money she handled was derived from selling photographic rights of their baby—quite a robust little chap—to proprietors of infants' foods, for reproduction. To hear Minnie crack on about the men who are "dead gone" on her you would really think she was the only bit of cake in the pantry.

Yesterday being "Rejected Sunday," the day on which the hopeful idiot of either gender, who vainly considered that the Royal Academy plums were within the reach of his or her pole, exhibits pictures to admiring friends, Charlie and I looked up the Smudgley-Smears, in Queen's Club Studios; but it was a depressing experience. The poor, insipid creatures lead vapid, colourless existences, she writing moral short stories, and he daubing away almost intermittently; their lives could not be more even or devoid of incident if both were incarcerated in Pentonville, save that, I am told, they divide the sexes there. Then, too, poor Smudgley's hopeless impecuniosity leads him to

prostitute his art in order to have a "cinch" on some wealthy advertiser or other, and occasionally this leads to highly incongruous effects. Setting aside his "Solomon taking leave of Sheba," in which the artist, in an utterly futile attempt to get money out of John Corlett, has represented the fine old biblical masher presenting the dusky queen with a three-quarter length *Sporting Times* craotint of himself, he has absurdly foreshortened the Atlantic Ocean in the middle distance of "The International Yacht Race, 1899," so as to bring in the partisans of Mr Vaseline standing cheering on the American shore, whilst, just across the picture, Sir Thomas Lipton's *employés* from the City Road are massed on the white cliffs of Albion, yelling to *Shamrock's* sailing master to take the bung out of his brain chamber and pull *Columbia* down. Poor things! They are utterly ethereal, so entirely unworldly that if one bade them draw out Leviathan with a roach line or bind Arcturus and his sons with banjo strings, they would cheerfully attempt to comply.

And, speaking of the ethereal, dear, how I do wish you could have been with us on Monday night, when dear Charlie carried me off to the palatial premises of the National Thick Ear Club to witness an entirely new pugilistic drama which,

it is hoped, will presently drive the unclean social-problem play from the boards, and tighten the bonds already existing between the roped arena and the stage. The piece, which was specially written for the occasion, I am told, by an ex-amateur champion of the middle-weights, who is of literary tendencies, bore the promising, if somewhat odd, title of *Under the Spread-Eagling Chestnut Tree; or the Champion Blacksmith and the Heavy-Weight Bouncer, who Worked like a Beaver, but couldn't Knock a Hole in a Tub of Butter.* A certain "Sailor Jerry" played the blacksmith, whilst the *rôle* of the bouncer was undertaken by a creature described on the programme as "Bourke's Big 'Un, from Battersea, open to meet all comers at 12.7." But the official synopsis, which I append, will probably convey to your mind a much more accurate idea of the piece than I could suggest:—

"As the curtain rises, Blacksmith Ben, the Royal Arch moulder, is discovered in his forge, surrounded by flywheels and dry-sand cylinders, casting a ten-ton engine bed-plate, additional appropriateness being lent to the scene by the members of the German Gymnasium Glee Club, who stand around dressed as blacksmiths and render the "Anvil Chorus" to an accompaniment of chimes rung on suspended horse-shoes and cast-iron shoful cabwheel flanges. The sporting interest in those in front is awakened at the very outset by the arrival of a half-drunken shoeing-smith (impersonated

by Dick Switch of Drury Lane, runner-up in Boss Foley's All World Handicap, 1887), who proceeds to make coarse remarks about Blacksmith Ben's sweetheart, and talks about what he'd do if any self-styled champion took a liberty with *him*. All this chewing of the rag provokes Ben, who sets about his man, first giving the spectators an exhibition of his splendid left by a series of visitations on Dick's short slats, and finally bores in with the right and puts him to sleep with a half-hooked punch over the solar plexus, the German Gymnasium Glee Club meantime obliging with "Sock me to sleep, mother, sock me to sleep."

Scene II. represents the interior of the village inn, the German Gymnasium Glee Club, dressed as waggoners and ploughboys, kindly giving "Little Brown Jug, how I love thee," as the curtain rises. As Ben is getting his supper beer he notices that Polly, the landlord's daughter, is weeping, and, asking her the reason, she tells him that a year ago her bedridden father foolishly put his name on the back of a bill to oblige a friend, and now has to face his Waterloo. The bad news has spread so swiftly that the brewers have already cut off supplies, the tobacconists have put in an execution, and Messrs Meredith & Drew's representative has come down personally and garnisheed all the heart-cakes. As she sobs out these words, the German Gymnasium Glee Club, disguised as sheriff's officers, advances to the footlights and gives Verdi's beautiful "Chorus of Men-in-Possession," from *Il Creditori*. Ben says that if the big creditor will only lay off for a week, he will cast enough engine bedplates between this and to-morrow to pay out the little 'uns; but to this the Big 'Un from Battersea, who has got possession of the bill by discounting it, flatly disagrees, and pulls out an iron winch to start taking down the bedstead on which the old man is sleeping. Ben interposes. There is a bit of rapid shouting—a blow with a stick by the Big 'Un, and—Ben challenges the world! The Battersea man then says he was reckoned to be

on the top of the heap once, and, as he still thinks he can go a bit, he's willing to meet Ben, whenever and wherever, and take a slight shade of odds he sets his head rocking. To this Ben modestly replies that it can't happen sooner than he desires it, and that if he doesn't succeed in stopping the gent with the crimped ear inside of nine minutes, all he asks is that henceforth his friends will regard him as a lobster in the can. As the curtain rolls down the German Gymnasium Glee Glub gents will feelingly put up, "At eventide a mother lost her son."

Scene III. shows Canvey Island at daybreak, and the parties coming ashore from a cement barge. All the preliminaries being settled, the battle begins. The Battersea man cuts loose right away as though he'd fairly got the world by the seat of the breeches, but he's a back number. The blacksmith is soon seen to be sending them home in pairs, and, though the Big 'Un works like a beaver, he's soon too much blown to block properly, and keeps on stopping them with his nose. Early in the third round the Big 'Un clearly sees, although both his eyes are closed, that he has seriously underrated the boiler-maker, but just as he begins feeling round the ring for a lightning-rod to climb in order to avoid any further altercation, the ironmoulder drops him across the top rope with a short jolt just below the Adam's apple, and, closing with him before he falls, chucks him clean outside the ring, killing an armed warder from Borstal, who is travelling through the long grass on his belly in search of "strays."

Although perhaps the plot was a trifle crude, and that one felt a sort of fruitless sympathy for the poor Battersea creature from the very outset, the production, I think, gives the untruth direct to the anti-sporting person who recently said that

the only real way to elevate the stage was by the aid of jackscrews and steam derricks—not that it greatly signifies *what* the enemies of sport say or do. *Apropos* of sport, dearest, I really must tell you how grieved I am to learn that Arthur is not to be allowed to play in the Press match against the Rest of Fleet Street, still one cannot wonder that the committee should erase his name from the team after he had, at practice, solemnly chalked his bat and then asked whether he was spot or plain. Be sure you let me know whether he succeeds in his praiseworthy resolve to live without intoxicants for three consecutive days, because I have seen similarly earnest endeavours fail. Really, dear, men are mere children in these matters. Do you remember when dear Dickie the Driver and Billie Fitzditto bet each other a fiver that they would not touch alcohol for one calendar month? Of course, during that period, each went about town with a banknote in his fist ready to pay the other, but each kept a solemn face till one night Billie dropped into the Empire and found Dickie spinning round like a tee-to-tum. Dickie did not turn and fly at the sight of Billie, but welcomed him as warmly as butter on a teacake, and assured him that he was just beginning to understand why professed

teetotalers, with their queerly named cordials and essences, did not repine and die. He had just had his eighteenth absinthe, had positively enjoyed it, and, personally, didn't care if he never touched wines, spirits, or any other intoxicants again! He felt as light-hearted as a canary, he said, and to prove it offered there and then to sing any other canary in the world out of sight of land or water.

By the way, Madge, do you happen to have heard of Daisy Fraser's latest love affair? I think you must remember Daisy Fraser, dear, a tall chemical blonde, who went to a boarding-school in Greece, at which the whole curriculum consisted of the arts of love and the secret of making rose jam, the national idea of a woman's household duties. Cupid is a marvellous magician, as one fully realises when one overhears a callow youth of twenty address a still fascinating belle of forty, to whom he is giving supper, as "Baby," but Daisy's most recent break goes to prove that Love is stone deaf as well as blind.

I think I told you in my last how she gave the athletic stockbroker at Hove the mitten? She tried hard to take an affectionate interest in his dumb-bell practice and his weight-lifting; but as

he only seemed to wax enthusiastic when telling her how, whilst holding two "fifty-six" bar-bells in each hand, he could pick up a coal-scuttle in his teeth, why, as she herself said, "I really didn't see what good it could all be to *me*," so she sent her portmanteau up by rail and started to ride to town on her bike. By the time she got as far as Wivelsfield she felt so fearfully weary that she turned into the L.B. and S.C.R. station, and booked to town by the 4.27, but, strange to relate, the train was late. It had not made its appearance by quite 4.30, and Daisy, feeling very thirsty, and seeing that there was no refreshment room on the platform, strolled over to a pretty farm-house in the middle distance to get a glass of milk. Two hours later she accepted the hand of the farmer, who was a widower, in matrimony, and now she finds that he has ten children by his first wife, as well as a most distressing and appalling impediment in his speech. As a matter of hard fact he really cannot be said to speak at all, but he opens and closes his hands spasmodically, takes a large bite of climate, shuts his eyes, and then lets off a low gurgle and a long whistle for a labial, whilst one of his dentals has been known to shake a quart of growing plums off a tree. Daisy has entered an action against the London

and Brighton company, laying the damages at £50,000.

Speaking of cycling, by the way, the general abandonment of the Ockham Road by the National Dress League is a piece of enforced economy on the local parish authorities, who will not now go to the expense of blindfolding the horses in the station omnibus to prevent them from getting scared and possibly bolting into the river.

How very unfortunate, I must say, poor Stella is in her attempts to enter the matrimonial state. It was bad enough when, after buying the licence, the brute was detected attempting to cash it at a public-house in Mayfair under the impression that it was a cheque, but I can quite understand her crowning piece of mortification when, after actually landing him at the altar, she saw the ring drop and roll down the hot-air register, where it still is; but that the minister, after refusing to go on with the ceremony, should have handed *each* of them a pamphlet respecting the bromide cure establishment at St Margaret's was indeed tough. At the same time, if he was the same Montmorency that I mean—a tall, meaty young man, with green eyes and a forceps-bump just over what in phrenology would be the organ of philopro-

genitiveness — she has not missed much. Between ourselves, I do not believe he is a Montmorency at all, his putative father having left Brighton at the time rather suddenly, and without signing the hotel register; but in any case Stella would have little use for a simple Willie who had "never known a woman's kiss" until he met her. Surely she is not running a halfling's kindergarten, where callow youths can be taught the ways of husbandry in six easy lessons, is she?

And now, dear, I particularly wish you to dissuade your little friend, Mina, from sending me any more poetry, for, though I quite sympathise with her in her laudable desire to earn enough money by her writings to keep her step-father in "Father Frigid's Fresh-Courage Drops," I am too often tempted not to pass it on to great editors on the Kipling space-rates, but to keep it back to promote the coarse hilarity of some of the people I meet at supper, especially when it contains such couplets as:

> "So she bade him go forth to seek fortune and fame;
> Kissed the hot tears from his cheeks whilst he too
> did the same."

I am glad to hear that your cousin in the 5th

Hussars likes my letters so much, but I cannot send him my photograph, as all that I have are counted, and Charlie would miss one instantly. But tell him, I will dream of him, and try and keep the appointment under the clock at Charing Cross. I shall be wearing a light pea-puce foulard, with mauve blossoms of the philopena on a pinkish ground, and a golden-brown straw sailor hat, with the tail feathers of the great auk on the left side. If he will wear evening dress and a white billycock, with an Epsom doll in the ribbon, I think I shall recognise him; but lest I should not do so readily, let him wave a large orange-coloured silk handkerchief from time to time in a way that will not attract attention. Ever, dear, your loving cousin, MAUDE.

JUIN

Mount Street Mansions,
Saturday.

Dearest Little Madge,—

Of all the trying occasions of which I can think, it is perhaps only when a woman has to dress for the day at ten in the morning, that she really discovers the great worth of good servants. This mighty truth appealed to me very forcibly yesterday, when I had the entire strength of our *petite* establishment spinning, in order that Charlie and I should catch the coach for Epsom at the White Horse Cellars at eleven. Whilst Fifine was curling my hair, Parsons was lacing up one, and the usually dis-

obliging Matildarann the other of my boots, and good old cook, who seldom puts herself out save when it is to gain some base pecuniary advantage over me, was hunting out all my jewelled scarfpins —for everything is an excuse for scarfpins nowadays, dear. Our small pin-headed page was deftly filling my gold scent-flask with fragrant Boronia, and in the best room Charlie's man was noisily removing everything in the shape of cups and saucers and replacing them with tumblers. And why tumblers, do you ask? Well, little one, the wise but seeming simple goats of Candia, being shot with an arrow, straightway browse on the dittany shrub to counteract the poison in the wound; the tortoise, having eaten a viper, forthwith hunts for wild marjoram; the dragon, when his sight grows dim, brightens his eyes with aromatic fennel; cranes, for a disordered digestion take a surfeit of sea water; and—the "piculum of Falernian" which your modern woman, who has been round the town on the previous evening craves, comes, not in a breakfast cup, but in a wire-nippered, foil-topped quart bottle, to each tumbler of the contents of which a liqueur glass of the *vieux Eau de Vie* may with advantage be added. Pitch all your grilled bacon, and

frescoed fried eggs, frayed at the edges—a dish as indissolubly associated with the British breakfast-table as fleas with sheep dogs—out of a back window; try a piping hot boneless kedgeree, with barely enough of the nectar I have named to cause you to adopt a private system of articulating, and a brisking coach-ride of eighteen or twenty miles to follow, and, if you have any complaints to make, you may communicate them in the usual manner. To any suffering sister, who feels so consciously cheap in the morning that fourpence-three-farthings a gross would appear to be a somewhat excessive price to pay for herself, I strongly advise a spin on "coachback," as dear old Dickie the Driver says.

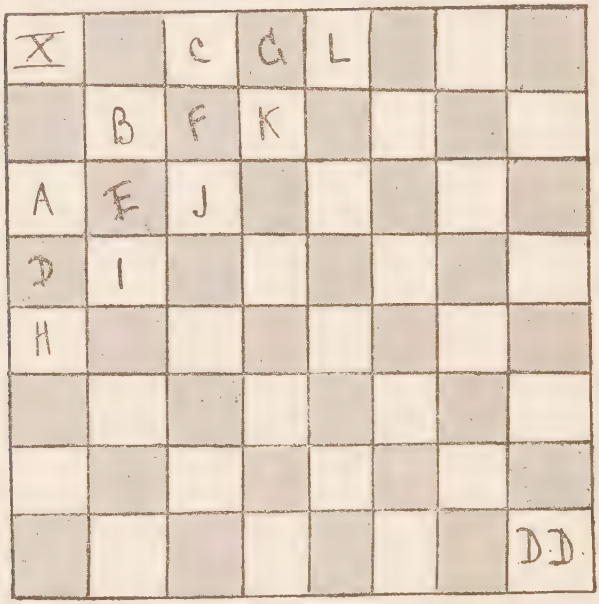
And what a sensation a well turned-out coach causes! with its rattling splinter-bars and jangling pole-chains; it compels even the attention of the cloyed and satiated, the hopelessly *blasé*. As we bowled along the Fulham Road yesterday morning, the short, sharp, occasional "Tummy-da, tummy-da," of the horn brought even Tottie to her window, in a new pink satin dressing-gown, eating buttered toast with unwashed fingers, and caused even Dolly to pause in the middle of mixing herself a very dark-complexioned brandy-

and-soda--no mulatto, but a "regular nigger"—to look out and leer at our men and turn up her nose at our women. There exists only one great drawback to coaching for the woman who is not fortunate enough to be able to reckon herself one of smart society's real *élégantes*: there is the dreadful, ever-present apprehension of an accident occurring. The constant fear of a smash-up, the dread of the shame and mortification of being undressed, whilst unconscious, by a lot of doctors, some of whom may know enough about the articles of the *intime* toilette to recognise that one's foulard, or percale, or such things are distinctly not of the *dernier cri*, must far outweigh all the pleasure and excitement to be derived from road-coaching, I think.

As for Epsom itself, why, frankly, dear, I did not care much for it. Epsom is too levelling. One becomes associated with persons well dressed enough to be patricians, but whose conversation discovers them to be the scum of the proletariate. For instance, Charlie was introduced to a certain "Captain" (for I have doubts about his commission) Splorger, who, doubtless with the best intent, tried hard to make me back a winner. I had never set eyes on the crude, boorish creature

before he was brought in to share our "cold collection," as he called it, yet, only twenty minutes afterwards, when I was sitting on the box all alone, he suddenly popped his head in and gasped rather than hoarsely whispered, "Nanty! Don't put it about, but it's a pinch—Honeymoon!" Only imagine it! And again, calling it "a pinch," indeed! Why, do you know, Madge, I had seen the word, or a synonym for it, written in chalk on my own doorstep—probably by some sporting working man on his way to his daily toil. Some of these poor slaves are so eaten up by the craze for betting, that all day long they muse and dream of nothing else, going mechanically through their tasks, thinking of some racehorse's name—fully a week before! One good reason why I did not back it was that I was somewhat "shy of the Ready John," as the Captain himself phrased it, for Charlie could not collect some sixty pounds which he had won over the Derby on Wednesday, despite the fact that it was owed him by one of the very best men in Tattersall's Ring, a Mr Dick Dunn. The reason why, he explained most humorously, poor fellow, by the aid of a small chessboard which he found on an inside page of *The Sportsman*, and I venture to submit the

knotty problem for your solution, dear. Here is the diagram :—



Please imagine X, in the top left corner, to be Charlie. In order to connect with a sum of money which he has won, he has to reach DD without encountering A (Alec Harris), B (Bill Schlesinger), C (Ben Cooper), D (Bill Forster), E (Harry Emerson) F (Mister Fry), G (Harry Goodson), H (Tom Hoodless), I (Joe Thompson), J (Bob Topping), K (Ricketty Marks), and L (Lance Logan), to each of whom he owes other and larger sums.

Possibly you may be able to see a loophole, but *we* could not discern it, so, failing completely to realise our cherished ideal—like the maiden who got married in Lent and dreamt she was going to heaven between two layers of hot pancakes—Charlie said we might as well rejoin the pollies on the coach, which we did, he, experiencing a sudden revulsion of thought and forming a determination to tear money from a fatuous world by *some* means, getting inside the vehicle, all amongst the rugs and overcoats, in order to roughly organise and think out the preliminary details of an International Lighting and Heating Company, to pump the much needed surplus heat from the burning lakes of the future state to the new flats in Buckingham Gate and the surrounding neighbourhood. It is a long, long ride back to town—especially for those who backed the animal that was left so far behind in the race that the jockey had to get down to see if his mount was really anchored—but, for a good part of the way at least, I was laughing over Roddy Wibbikins' story of a bacchanalian sportsman, whom he knew, who lived in a long, long—aye, even longer than that—road out Putney way, who got fearfully intoxicated after backing the second horse in the Derby, and made matters distinctly worse on his

return to town by drowning his sorrows at some house of entertainment near the Strand, until the next morning was fairly under way. It was indeed break o' day when the hansom containing him began to traverse the long, long street aforesaid.

"What number, Mister?" the cabby inquired, calling down through the trap-door in the roof.

"Oh, keep strai'long till I stop yer," he replied, not intending to drive slap up to the very door.

Finally, he stopped the shabby shoful at a point about ten or twelve rods from his own garden-gate, weighed out the fare, and wobbled on afoot. In the uncertain light of early dawn, and his fearful state of fuddlement, it took him some time to identify his residence, and, even when he did so, he seemed disinclined to enter it. He braced himself against the front gate, and, after arguing with himself for eight or ten minutes, came to the conclusion that he was just fuddled enough to make mistakes possible, and certainly he seemed to be right on the portals of an important error. He glared at the number inscribed on the glass fanlight. Instead of the 206 he wanted he was confronted by 509. He rubbed his eyes, pulled himself together, and glared at it again. It was still 509. Then he wondered how it happened

that he had got on the wrong side of the street, and several turnings too far up. He made a zig-zag across the road, now walking, now running, and fetched up with his nose against the scarlet pillar-box, which had somehow attracted him like a loadstone. With a low, coarse oath, and nipping his nasal organ between his left thumb and forefinger to arrest the flowing claret, he started sedately to recross the road in a straight line. My whiskers and straps! It was *still* 509, though he recognised every curtain in its windows, and every laurel bush in the front garden! He studied it from every possible point of view, even trying to stand on his head to read the number, but it perversely remained 509. Utterly bewildered, and somewhat faint from loss of blood, he sat down on the front step and waited till a policeman came along.

"Cons'bl'," said he, "I wan' number 206, 'nif you take me there, I'll gi' yer half-crow'."

"Well, what's the matter with brassin'-up and going straight in?" observed the officer with a grin, at the same time feeling in his back pocket for the tickets for the inevitable concert in aid of the funds of the Police Orphanage.

"Why, donchersee? This is 509, no' 206!"

"Oh, wickets!" cried the intelligent officer, as

he dropped the silver coin into his overalls and caught sight of the pane of glass over the door. "This is 206 all serene, but yer fanlight 's turned over!"

Would that Roddy's stories had lasted out the journey, but, after a few stoppages, the man grew melancholy, and Bobbie Prescott even elected to take me into his confidence concerning his latest little bit of trouble; why *is* it, I wonder, that every man in London who gets into a tangle comes to me for sympathy? In this case it seems that, about a week ago, Bobbie Prescott arrived at the conclusion that it was neither more nor less than a beast of a lap-dog that was alienating his little wife's affection from him. Naturally, he was extremely angry, as he had hoped to catch some well-fixed City shark at the very least; but he smothered his disappointment, watched his opportunity, and, as soon as his partner's back was turned, made a come-along gesture to the terrier, and lured it down to Hungerford Stairs. Here, in the gathering shades of evening, Bobbie fastened securely to the pet's collar the three second-hand flat-irons which he had previously purchased in Newport Market; then he shoved the calamitous canine gently over the parapet, and, as "Rags" failed to tread water actively enough to

keep the flat-irons above the surface, he went down somewhat suddenly by the bows, and has not reappeared. For two whole days Beatrice sobbed as though her heart-strings would snap, until Bobbie, to "recover the market" and divert any possible suspicion from himself, advertised a reward of £5 for the dog's return. Though at the time Beatrice readily declared how "very, very sweet" this was of him, and literally covered him with kisses, there have since been "restored" to the house 322 dogs of the breed described, eleven of which Beatrice has individually and successively identified as "her Rags," and temporarily adopted, till one of the bunch shall by some familiar trick reveal himself. "Dead tough *I* call it!" as Mr Sloan observed when his mount, poor Holocauste, smashed himself up in the race for the Derby. And this reminds me that on Monday I have to go to Marlborough Street Police Court with dear Winifred Walpole, who has been summoned by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals for drowning a batch of unrequired kittens in cold water before 1st April. Though the Society may find it difficult to enforce in a court of justice its inflexible rule for setting light to the copper-fire whenever superfluous felines are to be done

away with, there can be no argument as to the remorselessness of taking the poor sleeping things straight from a purring, hot parent, and immersing them suddenly in an icy element.

You must forgive me, little one, for not having purchased your coloured-edged hem-stitched frilling, but I have not forgotten it. True, I was out shopping on Thursday, but all my time went in encountering interesting people, including the pretty Marchioness of Georgia, who, during the Marquis' absence in South Africa, is living on a little toy farm at Hendon and a distant relative; Mr "Algy" Biggleswade, who was giving a stand-up lunch to three smart men at the ham-and-beef shop in Albemarle Street; and the always immaculate "Bertie" Chatteris, who had paused in his constitutional to get his wonderful boots varnished outside the "Haunch of Venison" in Brook Street. Then, too, Lord "Choppy" Crediton was walking in Cork Street, about ten or fifteen paces behind a tall, blonde girl, in purple satin with a braided pattern, who nodded pleasantly to the porter as she entered the Burlington. The Viscountess Virot and her new lady-companion, a Mademoiselle Lesbienne, a decided brunette—the Viscountess is dark also, but she is scarcely as lustrous as her lady-in-wait-

ing; has not the Viscountess an odd penchant for choosing lovely companions?—were both "trying on" at Piola's; whilst pretty Mrs "Ducky" Diplock was ordering garments to which one can refer only by innuendo at what was till lately Lady Warwick's "white" shop. But everywhere —everywhere in my mind's eye could I see what a fearful botch you have made of your new opera cloak, and what to tell you to do with it I really do not know. My dear child, you positively cannot wear it at its present length; it *must*—the dictum is imperative and peremptory—drag upon the floor at least three-quarters of a yard, unless —well, unless you are willing to let everybody think that you go to the theatre in a twopenny omnibus. *That*, of course, is quite impossible; still, the scale on which all the best modistes now base their decrees are (1) 27 in. if a brougham is suggested; (2) 36 in. if a pair-horse victoria; and (3) 45 in. up to 48 in. if a C-spring, leather slung, old first-family Barker with quartered panels. But why not offer the garment to Mr and Mrs Iky Mo, who daily advertise that they have "private customers" sitting in a state of nudity, "waiting to be supplied"; still, after all, the means by which it is disposed of are entirely insignificant—like the darkie's advice to the

pedestrian who hesitated as to which of the two roads he should take to Cow Flat, "Which ebber one ye trabbels, boss, I guess ye'll soon be dam sorry ye didn't take de udder"—so that it goes, and goes instantly.

I fully intended describing a few *hautes*, *nouveautés*, *modes* and things for your edification, Madge, dear; but the rain, rain, rain—nothing can be seen but rain. It seems only to pause long enough to spit on its hands and get a better hold; but I will try and write you a lovely long letter some time about Ascot week. Meanwhile, bearing in mind the generally accepted dictum that no smart woman can dress properly under two thousand a year, and keeping sight of the fact that among the married women in the smart set more than a hundred have husbands whose whole income does not exceed this figure; the active speculative mind has quite a large and expansive field to stroll about in.

By the way, dear, I hear of a most amusing little incident which set all Half-Moon Street laughing yesterday. That most popular little lady in racing, and indeed all other smart, circles, Mrs Donnington-Daffyn, whose *naïve* little after-dinner stories even the men are not above re-tailing, is hourly looking forward to the arrival

of a rosy babelet. Friday was the date first given, and, early on the morning of that day, a waggoner arrived with a load of straw, with the compliments of the Earl of Foxbush, and proceeded to strew it in the roadway in front of the house. Half-an-hour later, another carter with a second load arrived. Having presented the kind regards of Sir George Gimel at the house, he proceeded to scatter *his* straw on top of Lord Foxbush's. At ten o'clock yet a third load was shot and sprinkled, this time on behalf of the Hereditary Grand Duke of Seidlitzpowderburg; whilst, at 10.20, two of Lord Brasenose Baconthorpe's stablemen were seen bedding down an additional couple of loads, now on a level with the top of the area railings. Then it was that an intelligent police-constable rang the bell and said that if any of the three straw-waggons still waiting round the corner in Curzon Street attempted to unload he should instantly report the matter at Vine Street Police Station, as all traffic in the street had already been stopped. I wonder, Madge, which side of the house the little stranger will resemble?

Au revoir, little one; also *toujours a toi*.—Your affectionate cousin, MAUDE.

JUILLET

Mount Street Mansions
Tuesday.

Dearest Madge,—

Have you ever, I wonder, been inside a county prison? For the life of me I cannot remember, but *I* had that weird experience yesterday, pursuant to a privilege enjoyed by Charlie as a juryman in respect of his small patrimonial potato plot down in Surrey. That I may not tell you explicitly *which* prison, is due to the fact that I greatly offended the somewhat squeamish governor of the place very shortly after my arrival, but this much I will say: it lies in a sweet little hamlet of Surrey, about equi-distant from Hyde-Park Corner and the "Hen's Friend" (or whatever the celebrated hostelry is called), at Sutton. It is a fine old moated stronghold, with a distinct "past"—indeed, one famous historian has said of it: "Here, in the yeare 1327, lay the good King Edwarde in chains, while his son usurped the sceptre and

made a sickly bluff at reigning; whereas the Queen and the Earl of Mortimer really ran things between them, the latter wearing the King's clothes, shaving with his best razor, making love to the Queen, and winding up the clock every night for her, just as though he owned the blessed place;" and you may be sure, Madge, the talented historian would never have dared to say such things unless they were so. Both sexes are accommodated at "the great short-time shop," as the inmates facetiously call it, and when they have completed their stay, and thanked the master or the matron, as the case may be, for a very pleasant time, they are ushered out into the village street—the females at eight and the males at nine A.M.—whilst the delighted residents of the little village, having double-locked their front doors, peer over their window blinds with an interested but apprehensive air, as if they were watching to see what the newly emancipated ones would do next. But I sadly put my foot in it when I asked the august governor if any of his charges ever ran away.

"Base ingrates—yes," he replied, with regal piteousness, "though were it not for the daily demonstration of the fact that the classes with which we have to deal are completely devoid of

all sense, sentiment, and humanity, we might well marvel that such attempts ever should be made. That human beings, surrounded by every comfort and convenience—compatible, of course, with the terms and conditions under which they are staying with us—should voluntarily expose themselves to the risks, dangers, and general hardships besetting ordinary tramps, is incredible, incomprehensible!"

At this I sought to change the subject, but fear I only pained him the more; I enquired if he did not consider the silent system and the much branded garb needlessly brutalising.

"Dear me, not in the least!" he cried; "silence is golden, as you may glean from any school-child's copy-book; whilst as to dress, man never was intended to lay claim to beauty. He should be the trunk of the tree, not the foliage. He is the unseen carpenter, whose energy shoves on the gorgeous transformation scene; he should not be the gorgeous transformation scene itself!"

How very sensible and true! I declare I began to think him not so hard a person after all, the more so when he assured me that all so-called "punishment" has now been abolished in favour of healthful games. "Be good enough to step this way," said he, and led us to the courtyard.

"You were noticing our great bell," the ruler remarked, as the open air was reached; "it sounds the hour for rising. Alarum clocks were found wholly inefficacious; our guests invariably placed them under their mattresses, and when the hammers went off, they tore the bed-ticks, and scattered the feathers over the—er—dressing-rooms. Now here," and he picked up a long hickory handle with a sizable iron head on one end of it, "is one of our little toys—a fourteen-pound niblick." I could scarcely repress a smile; it looked *so* like a sledge-hammer. "Yonder," he continued, pointing to what seemed a stone-pile, "is a heap of granite golf-balls, which our guests attack with the niblicks thus—and thus. It is a fine, healthful, thew-developing game—if a little tiring. We call it 'Granite Golf.'" After this, the urbane official led us into a shed, along the wall of which a long, low bench was partitioned off into small compartments. In the end one of all was a wicker-basket nearly full of short lengths of tarred rope. Taking up one of these lengths in his left hand, and turning it over affectionately, the all-important personage remarked:

"Now, here's a charming diversion when the weather is too wet for out-door sports or tilling of the glebe. This was once a lovely flower—

(and he held up the rope's end)—it bore a graceful purple blossom, and was called by the horde unlearned in botany, Hemp. It is held in the left hand—so—and, with the thumb and forefinger of the right—so—the player plucks it to shreds—so—repeating to himself, 'She loves me'—'loves me not.' 'She loves me'—'loves me not,' and so forth; but retrace your steps to my office, and I will show you our cricketing records. I flatter myself we can put a fairly useful eleven in the field, though I must admit we were beaten by Pentonville in our last match, Still they were *very* strong. This is the record."

He unstrapped a large scrap-book as he spoke, and opened it at a well-thumbed page, whereon appeared the scores:

PENTONVILLE.

No. 39 c. 123, b. 7	4
No. 127 b. 7	12
No. 72 not out	98
No. 352 b. 49	24
No. 146 c. 53, b. 7	0
No. 261 thrown out by 86	4
No. 338 b. 49	13
No. 65 run out	2
No. 173 stumped 60, b. 158	0
No. 327 b. 231 b. 15	17
No. 43 not out	0
Extras	7
16th July.	181

And, beneath this, was pasted in the report of the match, cut from *The Sporting Life* :—

"This highly interesting match which, under the personal patronage of the visiting justices promises to become a delightful annual reunion, took place yesterday, and resulted in a victory for the visitors. No fault could possibly be found with the weather, which, with the tasteful uniforms of the players, and the courteous geniality of the guardians, went to make the afternoon the great success it was. Though the spectators in blue were, to some extent, compelled to look fierce for the purpose of justifying their salaries, officiousness was wholly absent, and a most enjoyable day was spent by one and all. The chaplain of Pentonville, who was one of the umpires, was, we regret to say, bitten in the leg by one of the home team; whilst Gaoler Bird (from Marlborough Street), who was the other umpire, sustained a smashed jaw, but these were the only casualties. No. 72 promises to be a great acquisition to Pentonville, and as he is a "lifer"—it is no harm, we believe, to state here that he is the famous Stamford Street murderer, though he escaped the extreme penalty on account of provocation—his services will be available for some time to come. It was a pity that he could not quite complete his century, but ringing cheers went up when his own number, 72, was reached. Of the batsmen of the home team, No. 953 has a fine commanding style, is a beautiful hitter on the off-side, and one for whom a bright future might have been confidently predicted, but, to the regret of all lovers of the game, he is to be executed on Thursday, the 22nd inst. He is not without hopes of a reprieve, however, in which happy event, and his continuing to stick to the game, he, and all other promising exponents of the national pastime, will always find a friend in

YOUR REPRESENTATIVE."

And yet, dear, there are scores and scores of well-

meaning, but mistaken philanthropists, who are for ever fidgeting over the alleged ill-treatment of these ill-advised social blisters, and who persistently send superfluous matronesses and half-baked missionaries to meet them on their becoming outmates, to talk hot air to them, whereas, as both Charlie and I observed, the only greeting that is at all warmly appreciated is the cordial kiss and the slap-on-the-back from a pal still immersed in sin, and the assurance that one is looking, not merely all right, but a perfect (vital-fluidy) "treat." And truly, what good can be expected to accrue from throwing the unsatisfying dream of "Christianity" at an erring sister who has regained her freedom, only to discover that her only sartorial elegancies—the little bits of finery on which her wayward heart was set—have been hopelessly, irretrievably ruined by being folded and packed by the steam-hammer process, and afterwards baked in an oven. "Christianity" forsooth! Begin with your officials.

But a truce to sermonising.

We have just got back, Grace Roslin and I, from the furious feminine fray going on round the *lingerie* counters at "Peter's," and, when Charlie sees my bills, he will probably remark,

as the late Mr A. Ward might have done, that it would have been money in his pocket not to have been born. Not that I have got one half of the pretty things I wanted, for the *dame du monde* who would secure bargains at the drapery sales, dear, really needs to be physically prepared to sustain life for ten or twelve hours on tabloids, wedge herself edgeways through human columns, punch the ball, pike and swoop, fell trees, trample on the fainting, and help bury the dead—accomplishments I do not possess in any marked degree. Still, with one loud-voiced, fibrous creature in a perfectly hideous hat of wine-red tulle, gathered on a wired chenille foundation of emerald green, with a trailing wreath of imitation huckleberries, I positively *did* come to blows. Simultaneously with myself she "spotted" a dainty pair of purple panne shrimping overalls in the seven-and-eleven basket, and, but for my retaining a double-grape-vine twist on the garments while beating the creature off, I should probably have lost them altogether. There are many little inconveniences to be undergone, I must admit, and to the girl who cannot "put it across" a jostling opponent, the sales are of about as much use as a penny palm fan in Perdition,

but the brisk demoiselle, who is on the mark with her campstool and sandwich-case before the early doors open, can rely on getting the full flavour. Above all else "Peter's" is the *chez-moi* of the blouse, and they showed me one there to-day of a bold design in three shades of red, suggestive of an impressionist note of a tomato patch by an intemperate pillar-box painter, which I should most certainly have secured, but that I no longer attend dog-fights.

You will be interested to learn, Madge, that smart society is all agog over the engagement of the young Marquis of Mortarborough to Miss Ollie Gobb, only daughter of the great Silas B. Gobb, of Cincinnati cast-iron-stove-leg fame. His lordship formally announced the welcome news to the creditors under his bankruptcy yesterday, when, sad to relate, two of them fell dead. Like so many multi-millionaires of the new world, Mr Gobb is of quite humble origin, and obtained his first start in life by selling hot frankfürters from a steam can on the Hudson River boats, himself having enough to eat only when business was at a standstill. Though at first somewhat prejudiced against the Marquis, who had been falsely represented to him as a *roué*, Mr Gobb now waxes enthusi-

astic over the domestic virtues of his prospective son-in-law, declaring that "if all young fellers was as white as Hildy (Hildebrand) there'd be mighty few dollars in runnin' speak-easys."

I am not at all sure that your little friend, who wishes to prepare her own trousseau, is wise in doing so, since many reduced gentlewomen undertake plain needlework so cheaply nowadays that it hardly pays one to take the trouble oneself; still, she might get some useful hints on cutting-out, I should think, from a book called "Colenso on Combinations," a new edition of which is, I observe, being daily advertised. They should not come below the knees; also put them in a yoke band. But you may tell her from me, Madge, that she is entirely wrong in saying that Messrs Parkins & Gotto have added to their premises a department for the supply of these garments; the show-card in their window inscribed "Ladies' Bags" refers to articles of quite another description altogether.

By the way, you have not yet said how you succeeded with the luncheon dish of fricandellians of the tripe which was left over from the card-party supper?

Ever your loving cousin,

MAUDE.

AOÛT

WARMBAD-ON-THE-RHINE,
WEDNESDAY.

SWEET LITTLE MADGE,—

To this tiny mushroom of a Spa, more or less endowed with mineral proclivities, and restful as a dead chick in a refrigerator, have Charlie and I—I, by the way, having first cork-screwed the *viaticum* out of the frosted-cake editor of *The Real Gentlewoman;* which prompts me to ask how would it fare with those hopeless individuals—men—if considerate women did not look after them? Without Athene, or Minerva, call her which you like, Ulysses in these days would have been hiding under a berth in the *wagon-lit*, lugged out by the leg at some such place as Lyons or Tounesse, charged with the Gallic equivalent for macing-the-rattler, and jabbed into jail, while the station-master played scales and variations on a tin cornet for the train to re-start—have Charlie and I, I

repeat, flown at last. Both of us were in acute need of complete repose; poor Charlie being sadly cast down by the failure to go to allotment of his latest production, a company to supply potted air to divers for rendering staying-down operations easier of duration than at present, whilst I was completely collapsed after the gaieties of the season. And Warmbad, though it is only just over the Rhine, is *so* tranquil, *so* quiet, *so* different to the restless, giddy land we have left across the border—France—where they never even dream of smacking a baby's dress improver without first waving the *tricouleur* and beating a drum. Here we get that pure air, slightly scented with the natural *crème de menthe*, which is so essential to persons who have seldom reflected in town save with their digestive organs; whilst if our pygmean spa seems a wee bit dull at times, we have nevertheless the late butterflies and the piping bullfinches —(it was a Warmbad bullfinch, dear, that used to pipe the "Anvil Chorus" so realistically that the sparks could be counted as they flew off his little narrative)—to help us to forget that *la morte saison* is upon us. I have positively *doted* on all singing birds ever since I was quite a wee thing: I suppose I got it from my old

nurse, Sara, who used to wander about the leafy lanes of Billericay on the spring evenings, listening to the wild songsters, "the cuckolds and the martingales," as she used to have it.

Warmbad is just now full to overflowing with well-known people who were similarly embarrassed themselves prior to their coming here, and prominent among the "cures" is a leading owner of racehorses, whose physicians only sent him away after dining with him and observing him attempt to open a black grape with the nut-crackers. What odd traits of character are developed at the dinner table! Do you remember, Madge, a certain little birthday celebration at dear old Kettner's when you informed poor dear Algy at eleven in the evening that he was the only real friend you had got in the world, and ten minutes later sent a silver dish of faultless *Faisan sauté à la Oscar* spinning at his head, and shouted out that you would not stop in the place with such a despicable cad? I wonder what really did become of him? I was told that he died of blood-poisoning in Yokohama after having Duckie de Tuppenny's portrait and a true lover's knot tattooed on the end of his back with a poisoned needle? He was a strange mixture of high and low

spirits—though I daresay the former state would have preponderated with him if that theatrical girl, whose photograph he used to carry about inside his watch, and whose letters he used to fold over to show his dearest friends the beginnings of, hadn't been and gone and picked up with a disendowed clergyman and Za-Za'd herself, as Charlie says.

Amongst other notables staying here are the Duke of C——, whose sensational resignation at the Cokernut Club I daresay you have heard talked about. But His Grace warmly defends his action in withdrawing, averring that the Cokernut is hopelessly in the hands of its steward, who positively allows the servants to go to bed at four in the morning, whereas, if only one had been allowed to sit up to answer the smoking-room bell, the Duke would not have been reduced—failing everything else—to suck the methylated spirit out of the cigar-lighter by means of a Sam Collins' straw, or whatever it is called; and also the once beautiful Baroness de G—— and her pretty boy husband, though the Baroness does not take "the cure," nor even bathe in public. This luxury had been barred her all her life, she told me, through her lady mother's thoughtlessness in yearning for fruit at

an interesting period of her life—yearnings which had decorated her luckless offspring with a basket of raspberries on the *embonpoint*, a slice of pineapple on the left flank, and a prickly pear over the pancreatic region. Thank heaven, *my* mamma never yearned, or, as she never went in much for fruit, my milk-white and happily unembellished body might have resembled the 22-carat window at Hunt & Roskell's on a Christmas Eve.

No, the poor baroness's sole reason for being at Warmbad is that she simply cannot remain at her beloved Trouville on account of the disgusting infidelity of her consort. The little wretch actually used to "dope" her nightcap, dear, and then, when the drug took effect, and she fell asleep, he would sneak out to the notorious Rue de Marmalade, where titled creatures, who have flung their bonnets over the windmills, and even local duchesses in high spirits, resort to play at mouse-in-the-copper and all sorts of perfectly awful games! Still, a woman of fifty (at the very least, Madge), who marries a young man of less than half her age in the hope of teaching him to love her, may often have to make a discovery and, at the same time say nothing about it, but when it comes

to being dosed with anæsthetics regularly every night and only recovering, always with a racking headache, to welcome home a half-foxed spouse, "with a tongue on him like a yellow-plush sofa" (so she tells me), why—why that's whar she go's'n bruk her molasses-jug, as dear old Uncle Remus is wont to observe. Society has ever been regarded as a boon by persons who were married and wished to forget the fact, but the poor baroness shuns it, and the perennial look of heartache on her face as she tells the story ought to teach other wealthy baronesses better. Most women naturally suspect treachery—being treacherous themselves—but *he* certainly might employ a more judicious duplicity; how many hundreds of the Chevalier Bayards of society are veritable Old Dog Trays at 5st. 7lb. at home, as they say in the horse-watching reports?

As the greater part of the day here—and frequently a portion of the evening—is spent in bathing, many of the toilettes are very striking. A tall blonde beauty came down to the water this morning in a jaunty little short knife-kilted tunic of pale blue pastel linen over a slight silk undervest of shrimp pink, which bore the wearer's monogram and telephone number in gold thread.

With brown silk stockings, gartered below the knee, and high-heeled Kate-Cutler tan *bottines*, this looked so delightfully promising and *chic* that it not only attracted the parsonic notice but completely broke up what had until then been quite a quiet little game of croquet at the rectory, which is on the way to the *promenade des planches*.

Neither coarse lace nor insertion ever should have a place in a bodice of a bathing-dress, unless the wearer is prepared to appear at the dinner table with a replica of the pattern sunburnt upon her fair bosom; though, by the way, the best modistes are now giving their favourite patronesses dinner gowns a little higher in the neck, a proceeding which, singularly enough, is extended to the best boys who foot the bills for the favourite patronesses. The evenings here would seem pretty long, I fear—for there is no theatre of any sort, no estaminet, nothing at all to do but fish for crevettes, "play to the billiards," or sit about and encourage the phlegmatic flirtations of the elderly German military men, who wander around proposing to young Englishwomen from force of habit—had we not formed a tale-pitching syndicate: we all sit in a circle and take it in turns to tell tales, just

as Boccaccio's lords and ladies did in "The Decameron," and last night it was the poor baroness's turn. And she told us a merry story of a little practical joke that was played amongst the peasantry in the wine-growing province of Ay, where the baroness autumned last year.

It had been, if you remember, dear, a very unsettled year as regards weather, and the grapes suffered proportionately. They were said indeed to be the poorest that had been grown in the Ay vineyards for many years—too poor even to warrant their wanton destruction by the "little foxes" casually alluded to by the first great historical polygamist and poet of passion, Solomon—and the resultant wine was so thin that it was hopeless to expect even the most bleary diner-out ever to call for '99's; but that was no good and sufficient reason why the young men and the maidens of the greatest wine-growing district in Europe should forego their harvest supper or abate it by one bacchanalian song or a single clumsy but earnest and uncounted kiss, and so when the unluscious globules had all been squeezed in the press to an ultimate point of tantalising dryness, and the local manager had gone to England to relate to quite a different kind of press what they were going to do about

it, Gavroche and Tortillard, and Amanda and Lisette, and every other sunburnt son and daughter of the vine in that and the surrounding settlements, gathered in old Lechaud's barn and "fairly let the tail go with the hide," as Molière used to put it. Lord, how they danced! And the mad, wild ditties they sang—and then the drinking of toasts!

True, they had only *petit bleu* to drink—a *petit bleu* so crude and elementary that at sight of it the average British stomach would have cheerfully resigned its office, together with all past emoluments of that office; but to the laughing, joyous, light-hearted crowd it was *Mouton Rothschild* at the very least. It was strong and mischievous enough, at any rate, to get into the head of Gavroche Carton, and with cheeks aglow he pressed the suit he had been urging all the summer with the sloe-eyed Lisette Marchand to a point that almost called for the application of the cold douche.

Now, as I have often told you, little cousin, there are two highly important periods constantly occurring in a woman's life. One is when her honour is at stake, and the other is when it isn't. And it was just at the time when Lisette Marchand was trying to take firm resolutions

with regard to Gavroche Carton that, as somebody says, a strange thing happened.

Tortillard Dubois went out somewhere and returned with a venerable stranger. He brought in a queer old chap, with a ragged red beard and a rough head of hair, and introduced him as Monsieur le Curé, explaining the old chap's strong hirsute individuality by saying that he was a Russ, and therefore a most welcome guest. Affability evidently was the newcomer's long suit; he picked up people's names so readily and remembered all the funny little stories that were told him so keenly and minutely, that he won the hearts of all. And especially did he interest himself in Gavroche and Lisette. There was nothing priestly in the way he told Gavroche what a happy fellow he might be if he only screwed his courage to the sticking place and patronised Old Mother Somebody's Courting Powders; there was no celibate and cloistered chill about the somewhat frequent "kiss of blessing" he bestowed on the happy Lisette.

In the midst of all the merriment, Tortillard Dubois, who was generally acknowledged to be a sort of master of the ceremonies, had an idea.

Why should Lisette, in the words of Tottie Coffin, wait till to-morrow, since she might be

queen of the bolster to-night? Monsieur le Curé, he said, had offered there and then to unite the young people in the bonds of matrimony; and even if they had had a mind to demur, which they certainly hadn't, the rest of the company might have insisted upon it, if only for the sake of the fun.

So they were married—married as they stood there surrounded by comrades and corn sacks. And the bride's garter was cut into favours, and a ringing cheer started Gavroche's old horse as, with the bride and the groom in the rumbling old cart behind him, he set out on the three-mile run that lay between the barn and his owner's parents' home.

As the hum of the cart wheels died down to a mere vehicular purr, Tortillard Dubois, who had been observed to be struggling with an apparent fit of apoplexy, burst into a roar of laughter, and, snatching the wig and the whiskers from the head and face of the Russian priest, disclosed—Pierre Dubosq!

"Now, then," cried Tortillard, with the tears streaming down his puckered cheeks, "the saddle-horse is here ready for you; just one more glass, and then, after them—after them to Father Carton's old shanty and tell them

we find that the priest is not properly ordained!"

Dubosq, the licensed joker of the vineyards, whom all had supposed to be at home with a sprained ankle, drank another tall glass of the unrectified red ink, and promised to return soon with a full and truthful account of his adventures, which could scarcely fail, he said, to be the veritable remedy, *id est;* the real thing.

But alas! though they waited all night, Pierre Dubosq did not return.

Not his fault that the old mare he was riding mistook, in the pale moonlight, a dry old ditch for the continuation of the dusty road; all the same the delay caused in getting her out again was unfortunate to a degree. One cannot guard against such untoward happenings.

Arriving in hot haste at Père Carton's door, he was received by the old souls most cordially. They themselves could not have ordered it better, they said; Lisette was such a good girl——

Oh, yes, they had reached home; in fact, they had retired!

They must have thought it odd, poor simple souls! that young Dubosq should brush them both violently aside and mount the only stair-

case the house possessed, three steps at a time.

"Gavroche! Gavroche!" he shouted, hammering on the door that faced the top of the stairs, and beneath which the reflection of a light could still be seen; and presently Gavroche appeared. Then, in words that literally trod the heels off one another, Dubosq blurted out something about the whole thing being a joke—a happy thought of Tortillard's—and, of course, if it hadn't been for the old mare falling into the ditch——

"Good Lord!" ejaculated Gavroche, "it is too late, *mon vieux*, too late! If you'd only ha' got here about seven—nay *five* minutes ago——"

But Dubosq, swooning and falling backwards down the wooden stairs with a loud crash, prevented him saying more.

Thus ended the baroness's story. Gavroche Carton and Lisette Carton were still living happily together, she said, although Gavroche could never afterwards be brought to see the necessity for incurring the expense of a notary; but Pierre disappeared most mysteriously. True, a villager, noticing old man Carton busily burying an ominous oblong bundle, all rolled up in rush mats, in his back garden two days later, had asked what it might be, and was told it was a

sample parcel of late-blossoming *facetiæ* that had got spoiled by being kept too long in the dry, and, as old man Carton was a great Latinist and advanced far above his fellows in floriculture, this reply was considered satisfactory; but Dubosq was never seen in the village again.

How odd that you should ask after Alicia Mawbey, from whom I had a long letter only yesterday—a most cordial epistle, literally reeking with good spirits—not to mention liqueurs—whilst there is one page that looks as though it had been slept on. Dear Alicia's main trouble appears to be with her maid-servants, seven of whom she has had to bundle off in as many weeks, while the eighth, who was hired principally out of sympathy for her aged mother, who had been again recently blessed with twins, turns out to be a perfect terror. Happening to experience a little difficulty the other morning in getting the kitchen fire to light, this ignorant creature poured more than a pint of paraffin over the smouldering coals, but finding the oil to be of such inferior quality that it would not blaze up, she straightway put on her hat and jacket, went over to the oilshop in the Lisson Grove where she purchased the stuff, and broke three of the oilman's ribs with a dog's wrought-

iron drinking trough, which she took from the doorway. "All this delay and flummery over a paltry threepennyworth of oil," says Alicia, "came precious near causing me to do in an appointment I had with a very dear old legal friend, who neglected to resign his position of trust until it was too late, and who was now coming back from Borstal four months sooner than he had reckoned on, the governor having made him this rebate in acknowledgment of his having always returned with the gang when the whistle was blown and never tried to escape." Still Alicia will be deeply grieved to part with the girl, who, for telling a lie to a dun or obtaining the cash for a snide cheque, hasn't her equal in the N.W. district, Alicia says.

Is there any likelihood, I wonder, of your meeting dear Grace Romer? If so, dear, will you please tell her that I will be home again by Saturday week, when I will go straight round to Madame Juliaranne's and put a brick through her window. Perhaps I ought to tell you that Grace is "out after" an exceedingly oofy widower, and, having the misfortune to be physically without form and void, as it says in the Scriptures, was advised by me to try one of Juliaranne's patent Parisian self-heaving busts,

of which she now writes to me, complaining bitterly. She says that on her way to Kempton Park races last Saturday, whither the callow widower was escorting her, the bust left its moorings and began to descend inside her upper under-garments. This, as she observes, was vexing enough, especially as widowers, who, like new babies, are all tears for the first six months, but then begin to notice things, cast unpleasant glances as the *embongpong* got lower, and Grace only averted a possible final catastrophe by getting out at Clapham Junction under the pretence of buying the *Star* to consult "Captain Coe," and bribing the engine-driver into giving her a couple of handfuls of cotton-waste from the hot box of the locomotive to fill out the aching void. Fortunately the afternoon was cool, and, as the widower slipped himself rather unreservedly at Mr Bertram's old Scotch, he got much warmer than the cotton-waste at the finish, so that nothing was noticed. All the same, I consider that, setting "ticks" on one side, Madame Juliaranne owes me an explanation, she having distinctly lumbered our mutual friend on to a last-season's bust, and a defective one at that. Grace tells me, by the way, that her action for slander and aspersion

of character against those hotel people is to come on very soon. I don't know whether you remember the incident, but it arose through her missing her last train to Brighton, when, being compelled to spend the night in town, she drove down to the Splendide in a hansom. The clerk must have taken her for quite a vile creature, for he said that he didn't let rooms to "ladies who were alone." I daresay they have to be very strict, and possibly this is the reason why so many men, who are tender-hearted and noble in every way, go about late at night in the hope that they may be of use to those of the opposite sex who are crushed and lonely, and need some great strong man upon whom to lean, and in whom they can place their trust; but this sort of sentiment cuts no ice with Grace, who has instructed her solicitor to go barefisted for the company, and to stick to 'em like a sick kitten to a hot brick.

Since you solicit my opinion on one or two other points on which you say you are sick with anxiety, I may tell you that you acted most erroneously in calling Lady D.'s attention to the dead oyster which you nearly swallowed at her table. The cultured guest, on making such a discovery, temporarily screens the lower part of

the face by raising the serviette and allows the unsound bivalve to drop from the lips to the ground, just outside the right foot, covering the fishmonger's mistake at leisure by working the rejected oyster into the fabric of the carpet by means of the shoe heel. With regard to the Court gown down the front of which your aunt spilt the shandygaff on her way back from the last Drawing-Room, and which you now wish to turn into a portière, you had better wait and show it to me on my return; but precisely what it is that you complain of with your tom cat I cannot decipher: you *do* write so indistinctly. As far as *I* can unravel it he is "missing," but Charlie, to whom I have submitted your letter, unhesitatingly evolves "missising" out of your illegible scrawl. If the former, endeavour to recover by advertising, and then well butter its feet. Cooking or kitchen butter will do.— Thine, dearest, MAUDE.

SEPTEMBRE

In the Island of Walcheren,
Thursday.

Dearest Madge,—

Writing is like flirting, dear Isabel Carnaby declares—if you can't do it, nobody can teach you to do it; and if you can do it, nobody can keep you from doing it. That is why, seated at a little iron table on the verandah of the beautiful Bath Hotel at Flushing—or Vlissingen, as it is called here—I am, though positively sizzling in the sun, going to set down for your edification the story of our sudden flight across the North Sea, which I am sure you must be dying to hear. To begin with, dear, London was fast becoming quite impossible. It was bad enough to find the dear old Exhibition almost entirely given over to the aristocracy of Fried Fish Place, Aldgate, and to the positively dreadful and wholly inexcusable class,

who, at the mere sound of the popping of a wine cork on the Welcome lawn, would stand on their chairs and rubberneck, in make-believe that they could whiff the date of the vintage; but when our Yankee cousins so preponderated at the Cecil (where we had been staying while my flat was re-decorated), that the bar-tender frowned if one ordered any but American drinks, Charlie and I elected to "cl'ar out" with the celerity of the Evil One belabouring tanbark. How *do* the cheese-coloured cusses from the States surround those awful "mixed drinks" as they do? Do you know, dear, I was persuaded one afternoon to try an "Oom-Paul-swizzle," and, after getting back to my room with the greatest difficulty, I could do nothing else all the evening but sit and gaze insanely at the big electric light in the forecourt, which looked for all the world to me like the spirit photograph of a giant pumpkin swinging in eternal space. Objects seemed to multiply themselves in the most bewildering manner, too; indeed I could think of nothing but the low racing man, dreadfully intoxicated, in the pit at the old Adelphi, who, at a most affecting juncture in the second act of *The Two Orphans*, hiccupped loudly, and bellowed to his chum:

"J'yer, Bill, how many ruddy orphans can *you* see?"

And, what was more, Poor Charlie was fully as bad. He took a "Riley Grannan mixed ginger" and a "Webster Davis peach gurgler," and, at the spot where he first hit the wood pavement outside, he left an impression considerably deeper than himself. He told me next morning he felt sicker than at being left at the post on a take-five-to-two shot, whatever that may be.

To begin at the beginning, dear, do you remember an ingenuous little puss called Dolly Fielder, who first wore grease-paint in the dear *Old Guard?* Alas! how many fond mothers who allowed their daughters to go on the stage in the comparative security of comic opera, have since regretted those halcyon days! Anyway, three weeks ago, Dolly was on her way to fulfil an engagement in a *tingel-tangel* at Berlin, when, aboard the night-boat to Flushing, she met the distinguished Dutch nobleman—the Comte de Tochas—who has since become her husband. Their extremely short courtship was most romantic; for the first thirty miles out from Port Victoria they were sea-sick together, and for the remaining ninety-five he was assisting her

to return her straying tresses to her invisible hair-net. Struck by Dolly's beauty, and, in short, finding himself in the familiar "guess-if-I-don't-somebody-else-will" position, the Comte declared his passion. Mutual confidences were indulged in (though Dolly naturally made no mention of her little boy—her "first offence" as she loves to call him), and the Count readily accounted for his whole life ever since he got too big to sleep with his parents. He comes from one of the very oldest families extant—indeed, his original ancestor assisted Adam in naming the *fauna* of Palestine, and used to throw stones at the Callaghans and Sullivans as they swung from bough to bough and branch to branch, sometimes holding by their paws and sometimes by their tails, in their native jungles. On reaching Flushing at six in the morning—of course I allude to Dolly and her Comte, not to the Callaghans and Sullivans—they had a hasty little breakfast of schijldpadsoep and varkenskarbomade at the big, ever-empty restaurant in the railway-station, after which the Comte got a shave, changed the ends on his cuffs, pared his nails, bought a halfpenny cigar, and was sitting on the Consul's doorstep to be married when the legation opened for the day.

And now they have settled down here in a pretty little whitewashed house on the road to Veere—which the Boers call Vera—with evergreen trees in front of it, and a Dutch windpump and a kitchen froggery or water-garden, behind. Here, in a pond all cat-tail reeds and clumps of *fleur-de-lys*, and lily-pods and bunches of the great Egyptian lotus, the frogs play an unending game of "I spy Skinner in the doorway!" with the gentle storks, by popping up in odd places and singing snatches of symphonies and part-songs, and then diving suddenly out of sight. There is one big, old, green fellow in particular, with a low register that would make his fortune, if only he could be brought to London in the smoking-concert season. We have named him "Charlie Manners," from his habit of suddenly appearing on the frond of a huge pond-lily and giving off the last bar of "The Diver" in a much deeper, grander, and lower key than any merely human voice could attain. Altogether—as I remarked to Charlie, as we shared a seat in the rattling old stoomtram this morning with a middle-aged frau, who was carrying a large black-currant bush under one arm, and a new-born calf under the other—there is quite an engaging simplicity about these

quaint, out-of-date, human back-numbers, which I may beautifully illustrate by retailing the little story, which is inscribed in Hebrew characters on a tablet inserted into the wall of a fearfully old dwelling in the Jewish quarter. Its antique fire-places, obsolete ceilings, and particularly its old mullioned sashes, still with rude scrawls all over the glass, recalled how Francis the First scratched his famous message on a window-pane of the Castle of Chambord; how Doctor Johnson was called great after engraving some poetry with a diamond ring on a lattice in a country hostelry; also how, in much later times, poor Hughie, for doing the self-same thing on a South-Western Railway train window—a merry little jingle beginning, "There was an old man of Calcutta"—was brought up at a police court and fined five pounds.

The legend was mainly of a certain beautiful Jewess called Esther van Winkel, at the time of whose entry into life and Dutch Judaism some wise woman or soothsayer, who clearly had been expecting the event, predicted with truly bovine gravity that the young one was destined to enter into matrimony at a phenomenally youthful age. Hereupon a deal of unpleasant Dutch-Hebrew abuse—veritable verbal dead-

cattage—was showered upon the hag by all who reckoned themselves to be within earshot of the disappointed parents (who had burned nine tapers continuously for nine months in the hope of a boy), and she was turned from the doors without the customary dole of peiepskinken and Kabeljauw well-loved beyond the Zuyder Zee; but, twelve years later, all who saw the now tall and beautiful Esther, with her great brown eyes and her full crimson lips, entering the shidduch-maker's office by the side door, shook their heads as they remembered the old dame's words, and wondered which three of their young men Fraulien van Winkel would eventually prove contented with.

"Een guelder on signin' de register, ma tear, an' een guelder vhen suited," said the venerable matrimonial agent, adding, from force of habit, "Please leaf carte-de-visite, vhich neet nod pe recent——"

But his formula stopped, as his eyes rested on his charming customer. As his orbs of vision took an instantaneous catalogue of the delicious morsel of femininity standing before his counter, his old blood almost grew lukewarm again, and he rubbed the bony structures of his hands together, till they emitted small sparks.

"To dee hoongry no pread is dry," said he; "bot for so peautiful a madchen as yourselluf, ma tear, vhere shall I find a suitable barty?"

"That's *your* piece-of-pigeon, not mine," replied the beautiful young girl, with an irresponsible laugh, "and, if you think you can expedite matters by having the brace down now, why I'll pay it. But I want a bit of class, understand—a bit of *class*. I don't profess to be squeamish, but fruiterers, fishmongers, cash-tailors, music-hall-agents, and lottery syndicate-sharps are barred. There's your fee; I'm on your books for three days, and if I don't hear from you by then, I shall conclude that all your clients need galvanising. So long!"

It was on the second day after this, that the shidduch-maker sent to Esther to say that he had found her a highly-desirable choson; also that he must have nine guelders more for his fee, since the bridegroom-elect was willing to take the bride absolutely without portion or dowry whatsoever. In a burst of virtuous indignation, Esther replied that she did not wish to mate with a fool of a Christian; but the marriage-maker assured her that the bidder for her hand was not only a Jew, but most devout, and one who wouldn't even take a

cough-drop without laying tephillin. The youth, he said, was much engrossed in his books, and was pregnant with a great theory (the exact nature of which he was not at liberty to mention), which, in the fulness of time would take shape and bring its promulgator great fame and glory, so that his name should be on people's tongues even further off than Harlingen. So, without courtship or canoodling of any kind, Esther van Winkel and Solomon Stoomtromp stood with joined hands beneath the canopy of the chuppa, and Solomon, with the clogged toe of his right boot delicately snapped the stem of the wine-glass placed upon its side at his feet, and they were married. Esther was an Ischto.

But, at the end of the first week, the beautiful Ischto went to her mother in tears. Her husband did nothing, night nor day, but read his books; he had not sung to her, as any well-regulated Yiddisher bridegroom should, "Lacho dowde, likras chala"—"Come, my beloved." Not once in eight whole days had he kissed her! With the celerity which marks the coming of the superfluous and meddlesome fire-engine when the burning property is more than satisfactorily covered by insurance, old Frau van Winkel—Esther's justly indignant mamma—brought her

fool son-in-law before the Rav. Now the Rav was young for a Rav, and, in more ways than one, a bit of a Solomon. He did not take his eyes off Esther during the whole time her mother was upbraiding the recalcitrant. Then the bashful bridegroom spoke in his own defence. What was it that was expected of him more than he had done, he asked? He had bought new clothes, new ear-rings and trinkets for his bride; he had got up o' mornings (since they kept no shiksa) and boiled the coffee, he had neglected his studies to cut the matsakleise—what in heaven's name else did she want?

"I will tell you, son," said the rabbi, softly, "she is pining to be kissed. He who never ventures will never cross the sea; take her home and kiss her!"

Solomon Stoomtromp seemed thujnderstruck. And not less thujnderstruck than horrified. Ever a bookish lad, he had never given a thought to any kind of vanity, and he had no notion of the way to go to work. He frankly owned as much. He was willing enough; but how should he start about the business.

"Perchance," said mischievous old Mother van Winkel, wetting the second and third fingers of her right hand, and twisting tighter the curl

that stood out in front of her right ear, "perchance his reverence would not object to show you?"

So the priest, with the young husband's consent, raised the bride's veil, and gazed for an instant on her downcast eyes and flushed and velvety cheeks. Then, encircling her waist with his left arm, he brought his lips to hers, and kept them there, till a slight sound, like the faint echo of a porous plaster losing its last hold, told that the act of osculation was completed.

The choson expressed his gratitude, the old woman curtsied her thanks, and the party passed out of the doorway. It was whilst the young rabbi, with a high colour in his cheeks and a very unparsonic light in his eyes, was rubbing with his handkerchief at the slight blotch of *blanc de perle* on the left shoulder of his sable vestments, that the bridegroom reappeared, somewhat out of breath with running.

"Pardon, mynheer, pardon," he begged, "but I have already forgotten part of the ceremony. After raising her veil—er—what then?"

"O dullard!" cried the rabbi, "and must I give you *another* lesson? Well, well—go and fetch her back then!"

With a national literature abounding in these

crude instances, the Dutch maiden's imagination is allowed to lie completely dormant; quite useless would it be to advise the fraulein who has erred to take a pointer from the English girl in tears, who, being reproached by her anguished father with regard to her condition, said that her trouble all came about through reading in *The Gentlewoman* that kissing was a sure cure for freckles; I do assure you, dear, the Boer maiden could not possibly realise it—the fictional part, I mean, naturally. And, oh Madge! you *should* see their grotesque babies! They are the most ludicrous reproductions of ridiculous parents one could possibly imagine—though I daresay they look well enough in Dutch eyes; doubtless the adult wiggle-waggle in the horsepond thinks the baby wiggle-waggle the sweetest thing out. If we were to devote to the mating of men and women only one-tenth part of the discrimination and judgment we give to the breeding of the thoroughbred horse, or even the hackney, we might be something to be proud of, instead of running risks, such as did my friend, little Major Murgatroyd, who, roaming half-clothed about the jungle, somewhere up the Congo, got his life nearly pounded out of him by a big brunette gorilla with a huge *lignum vitæ* club, not because

the animal had any grudge against the Major, but purely because it mistook him for a hated rival suitor for the hand of a certain blonde young gorillaess which had given it some encouragement at a recent cocoanutting.

Do you remember the story, dear, of the tired-out youth in the boat, who called out to the bargee in the passing tug, "Ai say, will you tow me behind?" And the bargee, supposing the young fellow to have grown numb from sitting, or thinking perhaps he was doing penance over some odd election bet, replied, with a grin and a glance at his right boot, "All right, mate, pull in to the bank an' I'll do it just for the bloomin' fun o' the thing!" Well, Madge, *I* felt very nearly angry enough to ask somebody to kick *me* yesterday morning, when I got a note from young Bantam de Bleys, announcing his mad marriage to that shocking Irene Warner, principally, it would seem from his letter, because "she was always such a nice, quiet little girl"! Great Coram Street! Why, as long as ten years ago, dear, that "nice, quiet little girl" had, to my certain knowledge, a flat in Gower Gardens, a wine tick with poor old Sam Adams at the Trocadéro, a standing advertisement in *The Era*, and a great ugly brute of a male man

as big as Brixton, who regularly "drawed her celery," as he himself expressed it, whenever she did an early turn at a music-hall. Sometimes I positively sit aside, and seriously wonder in which direction are we drifting—are women increasing in shrewdness or men in anserous gullibility?

Now, mind you write soon, dear, or, better still, take a little holiday, and run over. You would find quite an engaging quaintness about this old-world island and its vagrant people with the grotesque morals—indeed, if Charlie can only persuade the Comte de Tochas to oblige him with his name on the back of a bill—a name, Charlie declares, which could hardly fail to prove a pleasing novelty to the Hebrews—we may prolong our stay, when, dearest, I will write again, and tell you all about the *fauna* and *flora*, as well as the *sans culottes* and *canaille*, or razzle-dazzle population of L'Ile de Walcheren.

Oh, by the way: with regard to the black silk skirt which you say was "simply ruined" by the eggs you incurred whilst reciting your revolutionary poem at the social-democrats' entertainment. You can only try what a thorough washing with ammonia in solution will do. Remove the stains as quickly as possible with a clean sponge, after which dry the skirt in front of a

quick fire. I warned you of what would happen, dear, if you insisted before these persons—who, whatever their views, are not necessarily uneducated—in speaking of the Tsar's "bomb-infested throne" in such a way as to infer that the Tsar kept his seat continuously. Still, persevere with the ammonia.

Ever your loving cousin,

MAUDE.

OCTOBRE

CLACHANBRAE, GLENGARRY,
THURSDAY.

MY DEAREST MADGE,—

I certainly cannot agree with you that the fact of us both being in Scotland in September is "as odd as the droll old mismated feet we stand on"; I think it is a very ordinary coincidence. I might go further, and say that the person who cannot appreciate a Highland shooting-lodge in the early autumn does not know enough to carry viscera to a plantigrade—*id est:* a bear. Pray, child, what can favourably compare with a day in the heather and life-giving air of the old granite world? The substantial breakfast of hashed game and "one pint, one little pint," the drive to the shoot with the Highland groom (who, judged by his general air, is also the Highland hostler); the lunch by the mountain stream, where lurks the thyme-

scented grayling (for the salmon has now ceased to rise when addressed, but keeps his seat at the bottom of the river); the crack of the gun, and the astonished shout as you catch your toe in a heather tussock, and ballast a keeper with birdshot—did not your host remind you at starting that *everything* was "in," adding, "Blaze away at anything that rises: you can't bag a thing that ain't in season in October"; the prolonged dinner and burgundy-subdued "music" to follow; the much-needed, virtuous repose between lavender-scented sheets—what do these things *not* mean to lovers of nature and—old vintages? Oh, no, Madge, we—that is we who have elevated visiting and saving board to the level of the higher arts—can never afford to decline an invitation to join a shooting party at a *small* place—small I say advisedly, because, if otherwise, and there are many servants to tip, hospitality and the swagger hotel have mighty little between them. It is because it seldom shoots, dear, that our sex does not more fully appreciate Scotland. If only ladies would take to the gun when in the North, they would enjoy their sojourn more; so, I am persuaded, would the merry brown birds. Then, too, there are the dogs—the dear, delightful dogs. It is only

in Scotland that the collie—like the cow in the East, the stork in Holland, or the cunning little piglet in Erin—is thoroughly appreciated and communed with: out of Scotland it is *so* different. I remember a friend of mine who, to gain some real or fancied benefit from the Emperor of China, once sent the eccentric ruler of the Middle Kingdom a beautiful collie-dog from Mr Scruffs' odoriferous show, paying one hundred pounds for the animal, and goodness only knows how much for the little boy messenger, who took it to Pekin. Well, several weeks after the little fellow had dumped the canine down in North China, got his docket initialed by the Dowager-Empress, and returned to receive the leather medal of the small-boy service, the donor himself pulled the bell-wire at the Emperor's gate, and was received and disinfected by Chen Lien Fang.

In due course he was ushered into the presence of the great little sovereign, and, falling on his knees, and making the customary kow-tows as he crawled across the floor, he ventured to inquire: "Oh, Son of Heaven and Joy of my Liver, Illustrious Regulator of the Planetary System, how did you like the purp?"

"Fact is," replied the Emperor, setting aside

for once the restraints and limitations imposed by court etiquette, "we get a surfeit of dog-meat here; but it looked plump, and I'm told they enjoyed it in the kitchen. What?"

But the donor, with his hat in one hand and his stomach in the other, was already bowing himself out.

We are an exceedingly merry party here, though, seeing that the host and hostess are but recently married, the bachelor element certainly predominates; still, Sir Andrew is vigilantly observant, and spares no pains to let each fresh male arrival see how very proficient he is with firearms, even going to the trouble of having an empty ale barrel set rolling down the hillside and putting a pistol-ball clean in at the bung every time the hole comes round. This accounts, I think, for the reserve which comes over the younger men in the drawing-room after dinner. They sit aside with the whisky decanter and grow politer and politer—and politer still—as the evening wears on, till, last night, when our charming hostess took her seat at the piano, and asked one of the boys, ever so sweetly, if he would mind turning over for her, he approached, with uncertain step, and a perfectly imbecile smile, and acquiesced so literally that

he turned over not only the leaves but the music-stool and his hostess on it, as well as a *nouveau-art* hammered-brass palm-stand and a Sheraton curio table absolutely laden with priceless china treasures. Poor Maisie shed tears over the wreck of her pretty things, though she unselfishly laid the whole blame on her husband and his jealousy, which, combined, had completely unnerved the boy. "It really does seem," she told me between her sobs, upstairs, "that I cannot be handed to the piano nor have the smallest thing passed to me save by a caddie or a sheep-dog." Is not it ridiculous? If all married men were so absurdly watchful, whatever would become of dear Bohemia? But he has always been the same. Even on her wedding day, so Maisie says, he would not permit a soul to salute her, until she had filled her mouth as full of wedding cake as it would hold and then lowered her veil. Then again, there went away from here in a fearful hurry just after breakfast this morning, one of the nicest men that ever committed a *faux pas*—for one should not be too critical: the sun himself has spots, which heighten rather than decrease his effulgence—and, if ever I beheld a man suffering from shock to the system, it was he. Maisie, it appears,

had on the previous evening presented him, in all pureness of heart, with a Kruger gold coin, and this he had dropped into one of the four pockets of his dress waistcoat. Many hours later, as he went to bed in the dark (the last candlestick having gone before him), he encountered, in an upper passage, Felice, Maisie's maid, and, there and then, having taking a great deal of whisky—a certain quantity he was compelled to take, he said, in order to cut away "internal sandbars," formed by long residence in Egypt, and so save himself from "running aground"—he drew her aside, and forcibly kissed her. As a salve to her conscience, probably, Felice slapped his face, whereupon he slipped a sovereign into her hand, telling her to buy gloves with it, after which he went to bed—the very best place for him, I think. Well, early in the morning, just about the time that smiling morn stood on tiptoe to greet Glengarry from across the Grampians, Felice brought to her mistress a Kruger gold piece, saying that her sweetheart, who was serving with Duckett's Dum-Dum Dodgers in South Africa, had sent it to her from Pretoria. Though Maisie shrewdly guessed the truth, she held her tongue, and gave her maid a sovereign for the coin, and there

Felice doubtless thought the matter ended. A little later on, however, when breakfast was over, and the dreadful Sir Andrew had taken the latest visitor out to the mountain to show him the ale-barrel, Maisie buttonholed the Anglo-Egyptian, and, pressing the Kruger piece into his palm, the while she gazed straight into his astonished eyes, she said, quietly:

"Here is your coin again, Major, though you don't deserve it."

"G-g-good Heaven, Lady Maisie!" gasped the wretched warrior, shaking all over so violently that three of his teeth fell out upon the hearthrug, "You don' m-m-mean to s-s-say it was *you?*"

But Maisie's only response was a merry, ringing laugh, and, seven minutes later, with only half his luggage and with neckties and golf stockings hanging from hisimperfectly-packed portmanteaux, the Major was driving helter-skelter to the railway station, having left his apologies for Sir Andrew, and the explanation that he had been suddenly called upon by wire and the War Office to join Sir Claude Macdoodle's forces, engaged in suppressing a native rising at Ghargaroo, Central Africa, before nightfall.

Mentioning Central Africa, dear, do you remember my telling you of poor Harold Osborne,

who went out to Alligator Creek, in Old Calabar, some three or four years ago, and married the daughter of a great chief; she was a little maiden called Y'm (which, in the native dialect means "Can-take-as-much-cuddling-as-a-wooden-leg-will stand-poulticing") —can you recollect him? Alas! he is no more. Once too often did he adventure into that dreadful Congou; and the gentlemanly-young Niger Protectorate officer, who was the last white person to see him, and who gave me the harrowing *viva voce* description of his untimely ending, did not even know the name of the unfriendly chieftain who ate him. But it is quite commonly known, he says, that many of these polite but inexorable cannibals have large quantities of the bluest of British blood running in them. Harold always had a great idea of finding himself with his head and hands loose (as he used to put it, poor fellow!) amongst the Brass tribes, who dwell in that pleasant land beyond the difficult-to-navigate and frequently fatal Financial Straits. These presented little or no difficulty to Harold, however. He was well acquainted with every shoal and quicksand on the big wall-chart, from up where the dusky Laplander drinks his oil and rubs his stomach with the heeltap, down to where the sullen and morose Maori boomerangs

his surprised foe beneath the Southern Cross. So Harold got there; and, although there is not much for a doctor to do in a land where a small green turtle, a human kidney, and a cocoanut will support an entire family for a week, he had the great good luck, within an hour of landing, to steer up against a native small-pox epidemic, and in one day alone he vaccinated three hundred of Mbwmpa's wives and followers—including about three-score of the wives' followers—from a single threepenny-halfpenny tin of Nestle's milk. For this service Mbwmpa had made "the great white medicine man" the head of a tribe on the spot, and had also given him three beautiful seal-brown Adamaowa girls to do what he liked with—altho', making every allowance for a stranger's ignorance, Mbwmpa had thrown out a hint to the effect that the general practice was to espouse only two of the squaws, and "beef down" the third to eat during the honeymoon. Though Mbwmpa, my Protectorate boy said, had crude and nebulous ideas of what was beyond the "big water," and had cordially hated the whites ever since, as a young man, he went down the Benin River with a flatboat full of banyans and nut oil, and sold his cargo to a certain Captain Criterion, who bought the whole consignment, and agreed to meet

Mbwmpa later "in the third creek up from Sapele" with a "Noah's ark full of ruddy broadcloth," but had not been seen again during twenty-three years—he was quite an advanced old savage, and was tattooed from head to foot in neat designs culled mostly from the trousseaux advertisements in the ladies' papers which, from time to time, were washed up on the beach. He was a reformer in his way, and something of an experimentalist, too, for, amongst the comparative yokels from up the Gambia he was ever ready to wager that, whenever he yearned for an exchange of smoking tobacco, or funny stories, or languished for a "peg" of absinthe, he could always bring a gunboat's crew ashore quicker by disembowelling a few missionaries than by using the costly flag-signalling apparatus, which had been furnished him as a subsidised, but unarmed, ally.

But Harold Osborne's prosperity did not last long. His afternoon calls at the kraals during the absence of the great hunters got talked about, and soon were regarded as evidencing a too-ready predilection to err. Many a savage lord came back to his mud-hut from the village palaver of an evening inwardly boiling, and, instead of sitting quietly down and tackling his cold flesh banquet with gusto, would cast his

flashing eyes over his five-and-twenty blushing wives and demand, in tones of devilish cynicism, "Mikki-mikki, sooksook, mikki?" (How long's your dough-coloured friend been gone, anyway?") Finally, one too-indulgent chief said to another, "Medicine-man or no medicine-man, what's the matter with handing him one?"; and thereafter my smart little informant tried, as hard as he knew how, to locate Harold, and warn him that he had reached the limit. He was, in fact, actually on his way to the surgery-compound, when he suddenly beheld a strange sight. The painted rush-matting, hanging across the door of a great chief's bungalow in the King's Row, was torn hastily aside to allow of a big, tousled lump of humanity being shot out into the roadway, with all the velocity of a nine-pound shell leaving a naval gun. The human projectile had so much impetus behind it that, clearing the eighteen or twenty fattening Michaelmas dogs that lay sleeping around the entrance, it hurtled swiftly across the open space, and, with a loud crash, took down the residence of Old-Tadpole-with-a-jag-on, who was sitting indoors with his tepee off, whittling himself a new medicine whistle out of the left fibula of the late little Pig-eye Petey, the papoose who had drawn the black bean to furnish

the *plat du jour* at the Running Elk Cinderella on the previous Tuesday. As the fired one arose from the tent ruins and pressed his right eye back into its socket, it was seen to be Harold, but, oh *so* battered, *so* crushed, *so* mutilated! He had been coarsely scalped—evidently with the large stone adze locally known as the "co-respondent swatter"—and the quivering edges of the recently-severed flesh puckered and trembled on the pinky-blue frontal bone of the skull. Blood flowed copiously from both eyes, and, bubbling down to meet the tributaries issuing from the nostrils, clotted and amassed on poor Harold's blonde moustache like the falls of a crimson Niagara in winter. Many other injuries he had, from a pulverized proboscis to a lacerated Adam's apple, but all that he said as he hobbled away with his face in one hand and his slashed abdominal region in the other, was:

"Great Caesar's Ghost! And they told me he'd gone to Squatawottomy to see a man about an elephant!"

No doubt existed, my informant added, that, from the direction he had taken, Harold would soon fall in with the merciless Skunkatunks, and be readily eaten, since that tribe was then known (in the "close" season for all other jungle game)

to have been living on its own attenuated debtors and criminals for many moons past.

And now, dear, I must draw my epistle to a close, for having ascertained that we are to be given a haggis, followed by a blackberry pudding, for dinner, Charlie and I are going to hire a boat and sail about Loch Rannoch until bed-time. Nevertheless, I really must find time to tell you that you were guilty of a positively dreadful breach of etiquette in saying what you did at the matutinal mustering of your Highland party the other morning. Your never having seen the laird in a kilt and sporran before makes not the slightest difference in the gravity of your truly terrible error: what they must have thought of you when, in "a chickaleary tone," as you put it, you greeted your host with, "What-ho! This is where I draws the line at goin' a-bird's-nestin'!" heaven only knows, for *I* certainly do not. But you need have no doubts as to whether you will be included in the house party *next* autumn!

Lamenting the family ties between us, I am still your cousin,

MAUDE.

NOVEMBRE

Mount Street Mansions,
Thursday.

Darling Little Madge,—

You really *must* forgive me, dearest, if, as you say, my last epistle to you seemed "unnecessarily harsh and acrimonious." I did not intend it to be so, dear, but even as I wrote it my pretty new flat was on fire, and a number of expressions may have crept in that were intended only for the firemen. So please overlook any profane or unkind terms that may have wounded you, little one, as I really was not cool, though three hoses from leading West End stations and the manual from St James' Vestry, were playing on at me at the time.

I wonder what you will say when I tell you that Hilda Porter has got a baby? Probably you will put it down as a statement to be handled with hooks, but it is absolutely veracious, and

really the inducements held out to young married ladies by large firms of advertisers nowadays are well nigh incredible. Almost before the ink was dry on the *Morning Post* containing the advt. of the wee dainty stranger's arrival, the big business houses had weighed in with parcels of safety pins, baby ear-caps, yarn wristlets, whalebone stay-busks, waterproof crape, wart caustics, pink pills, poems on golden womanhood, embonpoint remedies, butter-muslin pyjamas, cot trimmings, chicken-meal soap, chair mirrors, table jellies, Torchon veinings, rubber-stocking supporters, tails and coils, coloured insertions, malted extract, hair wavers, "Cheese-It" tabloids, beauty cream, syrup of figs, hygienic cigarettes, and boot elevators—to such an extent that Hilda was enabled to stock an entire stall at the military bazaar in aid of the maimed and mangled warriors of Splogget's South African Horse, the corps which her repulsively ugly brother joined last winter after being told that to get disfigured would improve his appearance.

Though Freddie and Hilda are simply in raptures over their pug-nosed brat, and can already see in it a marked resemblance to several persons on both sides of the house—and especially to a certain wealthy aunt (who, Charley says,

is "positively *ill* with it"), on whom they seem to think they have an air-tight cinch—its face, somehow, reminds me of a dream I had once when a child at school, after having roast hedgehog and hot butter-milk for supper in the long dormitory. Although the baby was only two days old when I saw it, the gold ribbon and pink tulle *choux* in my pretty new pink felt hat, must have awakened the ancestral brute which is ever strong and alert in the young of our species, for the horrid little thing grabbed one bow, and I had to stick my nails into its biceps and nip it quite viciously before I could induce it to drop my precious millinery, already within a few inches of its slavering gums. It certainly did cry a good deal; but Hilda quieted it with an opiate for, as she says, it looks prettiest when asleep, and anyhow, it had to be chloroformed, as the young man from Alfred Ellis'—a most civil young man, with burnt umber hands and saffron finger nails, fading away, possibly, to deeper chemical shades up towards his shoulder blades—had just come to photograph it in its bassinette, a perfect Cupid's bower, all wreathed in tissue-paper honeysuckles. Hilda is having baby's photograph taken every afternoon at three, as she says it will be so interesting in after years

to look back and see how the darling progressed from day to day. As Hilda hopes to be seen back in the Row again by the end of the week, Freddie has bought her an exquisitely tasteful new riding habit of pastel *bleu* cloth, with three-quarter length skirt, and trousers with a broad gold braid down the side of the limb, and a gold cord and tassels over the pistol pocket; and, as you may remember, dear, Hilda has the symmetrical limb which only those who have discarded the habit of draping the adiposity over the patella and taken to the suspender, can ever hope to show.

Speaking of only children, dear, do you remember the pure young son of the pure, but oofy, old lady in Bryanston Square, whom Cordelia Greensills married and took for a honeymoon to Switzerland a fortnight ago? Cordelia had always longed, she told me, to have a boy's first love, and this young he-virgin had been so carefully brought up that he could not wear patent-leather boots in the daytime without stepping a bit higher than usual, like a blind horse. From Victoria Station until tickets were inspected at Neuchatel, he only once took his arm from around her waist, she said, and that was when she went to the stewardess's cabin

aboard the boat to see what had won the two o'clock race at Manchester. Unfortunately, whilst Cordelia was dressing for dinner at the hotel at Berne, her boy bridegroom—her dew-laden daisy! —felt extremely, not to say fearfully thirsty, and rigidly eschewing wine-lists and knowing but little more of "minerals," he was advised by the sordid Swiss courier (whom, in his boyish innocence, he had tipped inadequately) to try a big bottle of Hunyadi Water.

Poor Cordelia never saw her laddie lover more; by the time she came down dressed for dinner, he had, alas! been quarantined.

Speaking of hasty and imprudent marriages, by the way, all the men in their clubs are laughing immoderately over the "ghastly shlemozzle," as Charlie calls it, at Clackmannan Castle the other day when the headstrong young Viscount Glenalmond took his music-hall bride home for presentation to his lady mother, the Dowager Duchess of Perthshire. As I daresay you remember, the Viscount corked himself, socially, by madly marrying one of "the Charming Sisters Meadowsweet," from the halls—"Gertrude the Gonoph" this one's associates called her—and on the same day he wrote to his mamma announcing his intention of bringing the new

Viscountess to Clackmannan, concluding his letter with :

> "*Have the goodness to make some outward show of extending a welcome to Gertrude—stir up the tenantry, decorate the walls, windows, and entrances, and oblige me by generally endeavouring to make her feel that she is quite at home.*"

Decorate the windows and entrances the Dowager Duchess most distinctly did, but it is extremely doubtful whether her manner of doing so made the fair Gertrude (who is really a magnificent animal, with milk-white skin, red hair, and a voluptuous figure), feel "quite at home," seeing it consisted in having the ground floor windows of the old castle set out with haddocks and kippers, and dishes of uncooked eggs-and-bacon, and the outside lamp whitened and inscribed in bold black letters :—

Was it not *loathsome* of Her Grace?

And yet, somehow, Madge, this leads me to enquire if you have ever paused and considered how very few really first-class hotels now extend a warm welcome to guests who are unaccompanied by luggage—as many newly married couples are bound to be in this impetuous age of meeting at one moment and mating at the next? It is, I am fully persuaded, almost impossible for such pairs to find lodgings which are at all in keeping with their social position, a fact which sometimes leads to the most ridiculous situations. For instance, poor dear old Arthur lately met and married a perfectly charming young Parisienne, but inasmuch as he had not been to his rooms for two whole days, whilst mademoiselle's registered portmanteaux had not yet arrived from Newhaven, they were quite without luggage of any kind.

Foreseeing the difficulties which would certainly arise, and it being already so late in the evening that most of the shops were shut, Arthur—always so resourceful!—conceived the brilliant idea of driving to his club and borrowing the bag of any member who had died or disappeared recently, from Butcher, the night porter—for the night-porter at the Author's Club is more

like a watchful, considerate friend to the club members than a mere paid servant, in proof of which the poor fellow is rapidly dying of insomnia through sitting up for one and the other who have just gone down to the Strand to see a man.

Now the only bag that Butcher could find was an empty "Gladstone," but Arthur cried, "Oh, what's the odds! Fill it with any old rubbish, Butcher, so long as you make it as heavy as Sunday. Its only mission is to inspire confidence: it isn't going to be opened." So Butcher carried it down stairs, and presently returned with it, stuffed to the full limits of its two straps, and apparently of about the same weight as the kitchen battery which is carried in the rear of an army in the field. With this on the roof, they drove straight away to that palatial *caravanserai*, the Grand Junction Hotel.

Here two gorgeously apparelled servitors assisted them to alight and two others conducted them to the bureau, whilst a fifth, bearing the precious valise, stood at a distance which was at once respectful and yet within earshot of the voice of the clerk. This urbane person, who is supposed to be able to read character of all kinds at first sight, assigned them to No. 995, Series

P, to which cheerful but distant eyrie the well-trained luggageman instantly disappeared, while Arthur and Josephine went to the Renaissance Room to take a light supper before retiring, and give the gentlemanly clerk time to find out for Arthur how the trains went to Chapel-en-le-Frith in the morning.

But why should I fatigue you with details which are, after all, mere trifles? It had, of course, quite escaped poor Arthur's memory, when he entrusted the snide "Gladstone" to the care of the Grand Junction baggageman, that a good "boots" always unstraps luggage and puts out the guest's nightie's on the bed, so you may just judge of the perplexity and embarrassment of the young couple when, on being shown to their room, they beheld the battered old "Gladstone" in two pieces on the carved rosewood port-manteau-stand, and twenty-seven empty whisky bottles laid out all in a row along the snowy marcella quilt! It is perhaps not greatly to be wondered at that the managing-director himself called them at a very early hour in the morning, and begged them to leave before the other guests were stirring, as, during the night, diphtheria, and small-pox, and scarlet-fever had broken out in different parts of the hotel, he said.

Do you remember, I wonder, one Henrietta Treadwater, who used to pound the lyre with both fists and then endeavour to inveigle the cultured editor of *The Gentlewoman* to accept the result with a view to publication? Anyway, she recently obtained clerical employment—of a sort—at a School of Penmanship in New Oxford Street, her duties being to keep on shaking the table while new pupils wrote out the sentence "This is a specimen of my handwriting before commencing to take lessons of Mr J. P. Pothook," but, tiring somewhat of her prosaic environment, and remembering what lots of money dear Mrs Mortimer Toddpush used to make out of short stories, she has taken to writing them, and here is one of her latest, which she calls——

"A Rustic Romance.

"Evening was falling softly over the rustic village of Bunionborough, and the honest peasants, glowing with simplicity and health, were returning from the fields. It was a glorious Utopia to the eye from town, and the atmosphere seemed to reek of ambrosia. As a matter of fact, phthisis and tuberculosis were unknown in Bunionborough, the only persons who ever died there being the *blasé roués* sent down by fashionable physicians when they hadn't enough lung tissue left to bait a microbe trap.

"By the door of a rustic cottage stood a pure and beautiful girl, plainly and simply dressed in white, with a bunch of the blossom of the tomato-salad plant—it had been a damp, poor

summer for flowers—at her breast. A sad and disappointed look in her large brown eyes spoke of a hungering heart within. Why was he late? Had he forgotten their last tryst? It seemed impossible. Love, like hate, always remembers; it is only indifference that forgets.

"Just then the scrunch of an iron-shod heel on the gravel road awoke the slumbering echoes where time and solitude had had it all their own way for centuries, and up from the valley came a tall, handsome young countryman, the very picture of health, in rustic cords and the all-pervading leather leggings. He was the personification of manly beauty, and might have been a Saxon chieftain in the days when our forefathers were savages, with hair upon their hands, arms, feet and breasts, and a religion entirely unfit for publication. He planted a long-pent, languorous kiss on the girl's full, red lips, and asked, in a tone of pained anxiety,

"'My darling, have you abandoned your rash intention?'

"'No, Willie, I have not,' she answered quietly but deliberately. 'It is impossible for me to pretend to misunderstand the attentions of the vicar any longer, and, as you say you have not the means to marry me, I must turn to the stage. Willingly, cheerfully, would I remain in Bunionborough, but between you and the parson I look like getting joshed at the finish.'

"'Maggie,' he cried, in the terrible earnestness of an anguished heart, 'how do you know that you have the necessary talent?'

"'Oh, I've already been up and had my voice tried,' she replied, somewhat carelessly.

"'But, perchance—I only say perchance, my child—you might not succeed,' and he grew more serious still, 'and—oh, cursed thought!—would you, would you—starve?'

"'What's the matter with the currant buns at Short's?' she answered lightly.

"'Nay, nay,' he persisted, ignoring her words. 'Give up

this wild idea of becoming an actress. Write and tell them that you cannot do it. Tell them that your conscience rebels——'

"'Oh, rats!' cried the beauty, pettishly. 'What does a Henrietta Street dramatic agent know about "conscience?" Besides, I've signed my contract——'

"'Cannot you expand it?'

"'To what purpose? To stay here on my aunt's charity, leading a purposeless, monotonous existence, only alleviated by my own useless observations on the curiosities of animal and plant life? No; London is my anchorage, and if the plums of society drama prove too high for my pole, I must slide a little lower and take a swat at the singing soubrette industry!'

"Her lover turned away and gazed across the road. There was a choking sensation as of too much mashed potato in his throat that checked his words. Maggie Riches' face grew a trifle hard, and there was a forced, unnatural ring in her voice as she continued:

"'Don't get pains in the neck on my account, Willie; *I* shall succeed right enough.'

"He made her no answer. His brain reeled, and he thought only of the legend of Washington Irving, of the times before women brought sadness and responsibility to men; of the discovery of them, living by the side of a primeval lake on a vegetable diet, and of the men running after them like non-paying guests from a burning boarding-house. The meaner a man may be, so far superior does he think himself to the woman he has burdened with his patronage.

"'Come,' said the beautiful girl, noting but not understanding his embarrassment, 'if you care to do me a parting good turn, come and carry my props to the railway station.'"

. . . . . .

"Six months had rolled slowly and laboriously over the

rustic village of Bunionborough since the evening when William Whangleathers carried Maggie Riches' box to the station. Occasionally letters came from Maggie, though, as the Governor of North Carolina might have remarked, it was a blamed long time between postal deliveries; and then, too, they were such weird, strange letters, reeking of the new humour and of a world of which William knew nothing. As he read, or occasionally perused, these screeds, his honest mouth would become unclasped, just as it was wont to do when he slept on his back in the harvest field, and the conviction would force itself upon his simple mind that whatever else Maggie had achieved in town she had incurred a faculty for erring more promptly than any maiden who had previously migrated from Bunionborough. For there had been others.

"She spoke of 'boys' who 'gave' her lunch, and were 'awfully sweet' when she experienced a 'scarcity of the ready'; and William talked it over with the village postmaster, who also dealt in groceries, patent medicines, boots and shoes, gunpowder, dog-licences, sarsaparilla, sheep dip, and axe helves, until he brought on a dull aching sensation at the base of what he called his brain. And when, in a *billet* which arrived one Sabbath morning, his erstwhile sweetheart said she supposed he was 'still the giddy village kipper as of old,' he went to church as one in a strange dream and positively skipped one of the Commandments. But she had not failed. Like the fervent and enthusiastic French girl in Sam Pallant's only novel, who came over to England determined to earn a living somehow, she had succeeded. She spoke of the gay frocks she wore, of the floral tributes she received, and of the triumphs she had won. No longer was she Maggie Riches; her signature now was Marguerite Richesse.

"Nevertheless did William's heart sink. Even had Maggie's —for she was still Maggie to him—letters been more ambiguous than they were, he could have read between the lines the great change that had come over her. He doubted whether she

would now—well, say consider it *au fait* to cover her hat feathers with a cotton pocket-handkerchief at the first few spots of rain. He became worried and unsettled about her. And one day, unable to bear it any longer, he journeyed up to London by the mid-day train. He would see her at all cost, he would look upon her face again at least, and if he found her unhappy, or in moral jeopardy, he would try and bring her back.

"Pass we to the last scene.

"In a small, white-washed dressing-room behind the scenes of a gorgeous suburban theatre, a still beautiful woman lay asleep on the threadbare velvet cushions of a settee. It was Maggie, of course. On the wooden dresser, which was round three sides of the apartment, and by the side of a japanned tin make-up outfit stood a three-star Martell bottle. Though the bottle was plumb empty, it wore a triumphant look, and William, who had bribed a gasman with a sovereign to sneak him in past the stage door, noted it all as he proceeded to secrete himself behind a pile of oval, dusty, leather-topped dress boxes that stood in one corner. He had barely done so when the heavy portière of once black cloth which did duty for a door was pulled aside, and a tall good-looking man in evening-dress and a heavily-dyed permanganate-of-potash moustache walked quietly in. It was the lessee. The rush of outside atmosphere caused by his entrance somewhat disturbed the sleeping woman, who, without opening her eyes, yelled out:

"'Keep that door shut, you gillies! Drink is the foe to sleep, is it? Anyway, I was downstairs this mornin' five minutes ahead of the bar-tender!'

"The lessee shook his head sadly.

"'Every single sinker off her balloon,' he exclaimed, quietly. 'This Sunday Pullman to Brighton will settle her if she doesn't stop it. Why is it that the Queen of Watering Places vends such ardent stimulants? Maggie is *always* like this on a

Monday. How truly hath the poet said, "'The triumph of the sherbet in the principal is the understudy's opportunity.' Where's Miss Buckingboard?'

"He turned upon his heel and left the dressing-room, and William Whangleathers, with face more pallid than a corpse's, came out from his concealment. He stole on tiptoe to where she who had so recently been his heart's idol lay, whilst his breast was rent by a thousand conflicting emotions. But as Cupid was about to triumph at the sacrifice of common sense—as William was about to lay his right hand upon her arm and his lips upon hers, the head of the bribed gasman popped in and cried, with an air of injury:

"'Hedge a bit, mister, hedge a bit. You said you on'y wanted to *see* 'er; don't go an' 'andle the goods, or you may cost me my billet.'

"So William tore himself away. With the desperation born of a broken heart, and fearing lest he should relent, he went straight to Holborn Viaduct and sank his little wad of eight-and-twenty quid, with which, and a little cottage harmonium he was paying for in fresh eggs, he intended to start house-keeping, in the latest thing in bicycles, and as he had no more idea of riding than a Solomon Islander has of tripe and onions, his broken heart is now the smallest and least significant of his casualties."

THE END

Delightfully romantic, is it not?

And now, little Miss Ingénue, only fancy your asking such a very artless question as "*did*" we go to the first Covent Garden Ball! Why, St Vitus is our favourite saint, to say nothing of Neil Forsyth. Some of the dresses were *ex-*

tremely good; for instance, Hughie, who had supped at the Tavistock round the corner, and had brought away a bedroom light and some snuffers under his coat, came as the old English king—Alfred, was it not—who kept the time by burning candles and who compelled his subjects to visit the throne at regular periods to set their short sixes by the royal lights. I felt quite sorry when he was turned out for chucking a barmaid under the chin because she refused to serve him, on the grounds that he had had sufficient: as if that man had ever had sufficient! Mrs Terence Wortonhunt's shockingly fast husband brought Letty Bunn from the Gaiety—for Letty is still faithful to him despite the fact, which she told me in confidence, that in the matter of making a girl presents "he is no blooming Parkins and Gotto." Theirs was, if I may use the term, a combined costume, representing "A Red Indian Wedding," Mrs Wortonhunt's husband being "Young-Fellow-Skin-The-B'ar" (a very striking dress, though his mocassins, like his feet, were not mates), whilst Letty was "Dishfaced Dilly, his squaw." He was supposed to have got the maiden dirt cheap for a nickel-plated corkscrew, a quart of rum, and a dog-chain, which Letty carried about the

ballroom, and the costume so pleased the judges that it took the eighth prize, a dozen of silver napkin rings—about as inappropriate a gift as well could be, since, of course, Terence and Letty are not at all likely to have children. Speaking of the man Wortonhunt, his poor wife daily prays for his death, I hear, and no wonder, seeing that his disgusting conduct has nearly lost her the friendship of the big bill-discounter who looks after her theatrical ventures, chooses all her costumes, and, it is whispered, valets her. Still it was all too bad of Wortonhunt, hearing that Madame was in the stalls at the Opera with Monsieur Juggins the J., to go up into the gallery and take up a position which enabled him to keep on spitting on the bald head of his wife's mash until, at last, he drove the pair from the theatre.

But, bless me! how I *am* straying! Ballyhooly Bob was there as a certain half-forgotten Irish nautical person who, early in the century on the coast of Wexford was killed by mistake through wearing a coat and so being taken for a revenue officer, whilst dear Arthur Roberts came as the "King Arthur" who formerly ruled West Wales, or Dumnonia, at the time when civilization was advancing in every direction.

He said he should have liked to complete the impersonation by giving an illustration of "advancing in every direction," but that it made him so bad in the morning, so, after introducing us to his partner—a tall, stately girl with rich Trappiste hair done in Sévigne curls, and looking awfully well, I thought, in an orange-plissed gown of some soft, clingy stuff, the bodice cut with a low heart-shaped decolletage and a girdle of purple panne high above the waist finished off with bunches of the blossoms of the Turkey rhubarb plant towering above rows upon rows of golden baby-ribbon—of whom he spoke as "Rorty Rebecca, the Ratcatcher's Typewriter," he carried her off to supper.

But—there! I cannot pretend even to *allude* to half the striking dresses I noticed, more especially as you wish to know what sort of headgear is being worn in town just now. As it fortunately happens, Dolly Kenwin has just got a trousseau of hats home from Mr Peterborough's, and some of them are almost dainty enough to entice fleas away from a Kennel Club show. One that particularly took my fancy was especially suited to this bitter weather. It was composed of a mauve rosette, with humming-birds-bosom eartabs. There was another called

the "Neuralgina" for winter evenings. It consisted of a dainty little beetle, with velvet ribbon strings, and looked extremely well, worn with a respirator. But one has to pay for the fashion at Peterborough's, and Dolly says she expects her little monthly allowance from her "best boy" will get knocked full of *mal de mer* when the bill comes in. Then again every woman is a law unto herself in the matter of her headgear—though, seemingly, it does not signify what may be the style of the latest confection sent home to me from Mrs Arris's: Felice, my maid, praises it so rapturously that she compels the thought that the toque I usually wear is simply hideous. Do you know that sort of sympathy?

And now, little cousin, "Auf Wiedersehen," as they say in Vienna, and be sure you do not worry yourself about that "acute debility and prostration" any more. You should rejoice that you are not too healthy: to be so, makes one look so coarse, I think.—Always yours, dearest,

MAUDE.

DECEMBRE

Mount Street Mansions,
Thursday.

My Dearest Madge,—

Very, very many thanks for your perfectly sweet letter, and for the little sketch of Daisy Freemantle as she appeared as Psyche at the conversazione of the Blind Boys' Home. Only fancy! But I presume the officials are blind as well as the inmates; still, what of the audience? Lest I should drop it or leave it about anywhere, I put it on the fire, and even the Screened Wallsend seemed to grow a little warmer!

How very kindly, I must say, you ask about poor Charlie's numerous flotations; but there are no longer any companies in existence; the poor boy was driven to wind them all up on a dismal day of last month. The truth is, dear, Charlie really is not sordid enough to be a success as a promoter—indeed, he has done some of the

very poorest promoting the City has ever seen, the *Financial News* says. In other words, he can initiate, but cannot carry through, a fact which his deplorably scanty equilibrium at the bank will readily attest. Others have gathered the honey of prosperity from the artificial flowers of speech that bloom in the modern prospectus, but we—if I may be allowed to use the first person plural, a prerogative hitherto exercised only by editors and persons with tapeworms—seem to have signally failed to do so. And failure to complete, in a City sense, means many disagreeable things undreamt of in other professions. The field-marshal who goes under to white-flaggery, is excused when he explains that it was all through carrying too much of the milk of human kindness in his phials of wrath; the physician, whose diagnosis of the case caused even the apothecary to smile, can hide the resultant remains away in the cold, deep earth, covering up his blunder with a neatly-written death certificate, couched in a few well-chosen words, but the city man who only thinly applies the ointment to the applicant for shares—the amateur promoter who omits to rub the prospectorial liniment deep into the system of the allottee, frequently finds that his little financial bantling

is liable to turn round and bite him. To be more precise, dear, the anthropoid hoodlums and pudding-headed country clerics who had taken shares in one or other of poor Charlie's companies, began, early last month, to clamour for dividends, which, of course, did not exist. The Horseless-Horseradish debenture-holders, and the Potted-Air preference B's were especially blatant. Not only did they show hopeless imbecility in their importunity, but they were most offensively rude as well, and some even threatened "proceedings." Can you imagine people being so asininely stupid?

Such treatment was not to be tolerated, so, on the evening of the 7th, Charlie posted to each of them a notice—which would reach them some time on the 8th—calling a winding-up meeting of each of the respective companies, at a hotel up a court in Cheapside, for half-past eleven on the morning of the 9th, and, late on the evening of the 8th, Charlie, and his solicitor, and his solicitor's head inquisitor, repaired to this excellent hostelry, so as to be in good time for the monster meeting on the morrow. But not another soul turned up! Though slips of paper, printed with the names of the different companies, were affixed to Charlie's bedroom door, and Charlie himself, with his legal advisers, stood there ready to be

criticised or cross-examined, not a single obstreperous stockholder put in an appearance!

In a loud voice, which could be distinctly heard above the distant braying of many military bands, the solicitor called on any dissatisfied shareholder to step forward and show cause why such and such a company should not be summarily wound up on the spot, or for ever hold his peace, and, there being no dissentients, the proceedings were formally declared closed. Then, borrowing three chairs to stand upon, so as to see over the heads of the people, Charlie and his solicitor, and his solicitor's chief executioner, went to the bottom of the court, and beheld, on the other side of Cheapside, scores and scores of the importunate shareholders being punched on the nose and thumped in the mouth by the stalwart City police-constables, who would cheerfully have sacrificed human life rather than suffer a single living soul to cross the sanded thoroughfare until the whole of the Lord Mayor's procession had gone by.

And now, child, let me try and tell you how exceedingly surprised I am at your knowing Sir Joseph and Lady Sweyn; what a very small world it is, to be sure! Of course, they are no longer exclusive, let alone smart, whilst his is merely a courtesy title; still, it certifies that he

is the son of his father, and, in the social set of which he is still an ornament, that is no small distinction. At Richmond, three years ago, they lived next door to us, and cultivated our acquaintance through Sir Joseph mistaking our front door for his own one night when speechless, and having a fit in our hall, on the morning after which, Lady Cassiopeia called and left cards on us. It was a mere dressing-gown friendship—a sort of early morning familiarity without any real or professed affection; but you must write and tell me *every single thing* she has ever told you about me, although I have always loathed her for her cynical sneers and her sugared impertinence generally. And *tricky*, my dear? Why, that woman has *all* the possibilities catalogued: she is "three shades thicker than gallus," as a dear little mite of a boy-messenger, all boots and ears and zinc cap-plate, said to me the other day, alluding to his abandoned mother, for the sweet cherub was too young to swear.

I remember one night sending Charlie in next door to see if Lady Cassiopeia had finished with my jaborandi hair tonic. It was a bitter night, cold enough to freeze the toenails off a cast-iron dog, and Lady Cassiopeia appeared to be quite alone. Had Charlie's sense of caution been

at all alert, it should have told him that he was fishing for trouble, and had better keep his weather eye on his cork, but—well, *you* know, Madge, how careless Charlie always is : in the hands of a designing woman, seemingly friendly, but substantially as treacherous as egg flip, he is as plastic as warmed wax. Almost before he had fairly got inside the entrance hall, Lady Cassiopeia gripped his sleeve, led him unresisting into her boudoir, closed the door behind her, drew the portière, and then demanded, dramatically :

"What passes here goes not beyond that door. An' you set the slightest value on my good opinion, an' it be your desire that our friendship, such as it is, do continue, *here* and *now* you will perform a service which, though trifling to you, is all in Heaven and on the earth below to me. In plain words, sir, and candidly and unreservedly, *where* did my husband go with you last night?"

My poor Charlie was completely flabbergasted! He felt as consciously cheap, he says, as a coarse chromo of Peter Jackson on the walls of the Vatican. As a matter of fact, he had not stirred outside our house, but had been taking the heated-flat-iron cure for lumbago—"thatte awfulle payne," as Chaucer puts it, "acrosse ye loynes whych tempteth one to give somme varlet nyneteene-and

sixepence to pick uppe ye quidde which one has dropped"—and had gone to bed soon after nine; but it was abundantly clear to him that Sir Joseph had been tearing the town open, and had basely incriminated him in his home-coming lie, the fib which men tell in order to bring the plums of domestic peace once again within reach of the pole of husbandry. Now you may have noticed, dear, that men *never* "go back" on one another, and my poor Charlie was certainly not lacking in the blind loyalty that characterises the male on such occasions; but the fictitious story of the night's doings, he said, was "harder to open than a kingpot," whatever that is. Still, out of her own impatience, Lady Cassiopeia assisted him.

"Never mind the early part," she cried, with quivering nostrils and her right slipper beating time on the carpet, "commence with your leaving Verrey's, after dinner—what then?"

It is no child's task to describe a West-end orgie, and keep it as colourless and devoid of deleterious matter as an evening at the Polytechnic, but poor Charlie plunged headlong and blindly into his spurious narrative, lest the hippopotamus mood, which was momentarily becoming heavier upon him, dried him up entirely like an aged hemlock. So, with an

assumed penitence, he told her how they first commandeered the Café Royal for coffee and liqueurs—had about seventeen—then Joe got hungry again and had snowbirds on toast, or something—after which, old brandy in tumblers at the Bodega in the street behind—Joe wanted to see the manager, named after some admiral or other, but the manager had gone to open branch agency in Honolulu—next, to the Empire, to see Dickie, but Dickie said to be gone home to bed for three days—next?—now where *did* they go next?—oh yes, to have an absinthe with Phillippe! Certainly *one* turn with Vernon Dowsett and Jimmy Howell; then—easy! Quite so, *then* Joe said he proposed to terminate the proceedings by opening just *one* keg of nails at the Carlton. Well, *that* was fatal! They had supper *there* —*crème de menthe* and *Enfant Gâté*—and ultimately discovered that they'd buzzed the last train. As by this time he was sound asleep on one side, Charlie suggested taking rooms at the Cecil—bu' Joe said cer'nly no'—pers'nlly he was p'pared t' cu's throat 'n' die dirty rather th'n fail to c'nnect. Hansom cab—thirty bob—eggs-'n'-bac'n, cab'm's-shelter—marv'l's!—long, dark streets—slumber. Remembered being pulled out of a hedge in Roehampton Lane, also re-starting;

but precisely how it all ended he couldn't say to save his pelt!

It was then that Lady Cassiopeia turned on him, a lissome, reed-like, languorous pantheress, and laughed at him scornfully; but, in a moment, her mood took a merry turn, and, slapping his cheek in spiteful play, she held out her hand and cried:

"Shambling, pseudological, sheep-faced old exile from Hades! So *this* is how men lie to their friends' wives, is it? But I forgive you. I forgive you freely, for dear old Joe and I never stirred outside the door last night! He told me he simply *yearned* for a feed of grilled sprats, and as grilled sprats are a cult—a sacramental feast to be snatched with the fingers from a consecrated gridiron, amidst prayer and eucharistic incantation, in a shrine from which the unlearned and unclean are excluded—why, I gave my maids a holiday, donned an old and sacred dressing-gown, and held high communion at the kitchen fire. And now, firstborn of Ananias and Sapphira—git! But stay, the strong should be merciful; I will give you a parting whisky-and-soda!"

And now, whenever Charlie displeases me, I have only to address him as the "sheep-faced exile," and he grovels and squirms; but on no account, dear, omit to write and tell me every single thing that has happened concerning that creature.

What do you make of the split-up of the Pubgoers' Club, and to which of the new organisations shall you belong? Charlie, always logical, has declared his intention of following whichever mob gets Mr Suffolk-Bassoon's delightful little orchestra: it *does* render dance music so divinely; personally I think dear Arthur Roberts put the case more concisely than anybody else has done in his early morning speech at the Eccentric last Friday, the report of which I clip from the *Referee* and append:

Mr Arthur Roberts then rose, amidst cat-calls and a shower of crusts and loaf-sugar, to a point of order. He denied having requested the previous speaker to hold his jaw; far from it, if the gentleman would merely undertake to hold his breath, he, the speaker, would cheerfully send down to the cab-rank and borrow a curb-bit for him. (Uproar.) He could imagine no more suicidal policy than that advocated by the opposition, of drawing the club's balance of a "monkey" out of the bank and lumping it on Volodyovski at "fourse's" and evens, both to weigh at the ring side, thumbs up, catch-as catch-can, the wheel tax to be taken off marmalade, a penny allowed on the bottle, and may the best man win! (Loud cheers.) But there was another aspect of the subject. It would be fresh in their minds that when Shock-Headed Peter was falsely accused by Sweet Nell of Old Drury of conduct which he, the speaker, could only characterise as being unkey-purdoodlum—(hear, hear!)—it was expressly stipulated that the early-door crowd was not started in the interests of economical young men, seeking enough hugging in one evening to last them till the following Sunday. (Cheers.) Consequently, what had happened? Not only had the poor girl been forced to carry

the same old roll of music—the same old typewritten "part"—along the Strand five weeks after the piece had ceased running, in order to keep up appearances and preserve a profitless peace with her mother, but the whole control of the club had passed into the hands of *personæ non gratæ*—(hear, hear)—and there was in addition an objection to the winner by an "also ran" on the grounds of bumping, biffing, and boring. (Applause.) Was it for this that his, the speakers, noble ancestor, dear to every British leading-lady's heart as Uncle, or the Chorus Girl's Friend, had bled from the nose all over the hearthrug at a cost estimated by the landlady as a fourth of the National Debt? No. Very well then. Their course was perfectly clear. ("All off the course, *please*!") Are you ready? Fifteen-two, fifteen-four, and a pair's six—Go! Despite the basic and fundamental rumours that the horse had been given three buckets of water by the trainer's sister, he should support the favourite—beg pardon, the committee. (Loud and prolonged cheering, in which the speaker joined heartily).

And now, little cousin, comes the potent question, how is your Christmas outlook? Remember this is the "next year" in which you resolved to do such big things just twelve months ago. If by my advice and guidance you have become a social success, you have probably forgotten entirely how it was that you became so, none the less I have done my level best, though "I would that some one more capable had been called upon to fill my position," as the nervous bridegroom observed as he arose on his hind legs at his wedding breakfast. For me, Christmas has but a shadowy prospect. Though poor Charlie, as you will readily concede, footed it right merrily

while his dance was on, he is just now distinctly under the weather; whilst Aunt Parker, who seems to be proof against the only one cure for neuralgia—that of getting into the absolute state of not remembering one's own name when hearing it spoken—has asked more than once for prussic acid sauce with her Christmas pudding. My dearest friend, Marjorie Markwell, who fondly hoped to retrieve her fallen fortunes by opening a book-shop in Great Portland Street for the sale of the works of the late Rev. Mr Malthus, points sadly to the never-ending procession of perambulators passing her door as corroborative evidence that the pamphlets are not meeting with a ready sale; whilst even as I write these lines, poor dear Henrietta Treadwater may be suffering excruciating torments from the surgeon's instruments necessary to cancel an advanced case of appendicitis. Only this morning I called at the nursing home at which she is lying, but she sent word down that she was already on the operating table in such a position that she could see no one; still—still I will not despair: the sun will surely shine again,—Yours for the belt, MAUDE.

FINIS